

THE MYTH OF MASTERY : A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF  
THE CONCEPTS OF POWER IN THE WRITINGS OF SØREN  
KIERKEGAARD AND FRIEDRICH NIETZSCHE

J. Keith Hyde

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THE MYTH OF MASTERY:  
A Comparative Analysis of the Concepts of Power  
in the Writings of  
Søren Kierkegaard and Friedrich Nietzsche

A Thesis Submitted to  
The Faculty of Divinity

In Candidacy for the Degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy

By  
J. Keith Hyde

ST. ANDREWS, SCOTLAND  
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*"[E]very great problem is like the precious stone which thousands walk over before one finally picks it up."*<sup>1</sup>

*-- Nietzsche*

*"The old Christian dogmatic terminology is like an enchanted castle where the most beautiful princes and princesses rest in a deep sleep-- it needs only to be awakened, brought to life, in order to stand in its full glory."*<sup>2</sup>

*-- Kierkegaard*

*"The 'great man' is great owing to the free play and scope of his desires and to the yet greater power that knows how to press these magnificent monsters into service."*<sup>3</sup>

*-- Nietzsche*

*"I am fighting almost like a Don Quixote-- it never occurs to them that it is Christianity."*<sup>4</sup>

*-- Kierkegaard*

*"But he said to me, 'My grace is sufficient for you, for [my] power is made perfect in weakness.' So I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me."*

*-- II Corinthians 12:9 (NRSV)*

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<sup>1</sup> UM 214.

<sup>2</sup> JP 461 [July 8, 1837].

<sup>3</sup> WP 498 [1877].

<sup>4</sup> JP #283 [1849]. Cited in Ziolkowski 130.

## ABSTRACT

Of the making of comparative analyses of Kierkegaard and Nietzsche, there is no end. However, this project pursues a unique trajectory in its assumption that both Kierkegaard and Nietzsche devoted significant attention to the issue of power as it pertained to life in nineteenth-century Christendom. Although Nietzsche's concept of power has been vigorously examined since the late 1800s, scholars have only recently begun to explore thoroughly the social and political implications of Kierkegaard's thought. While certain treatments accomplish this by isolating their 'political thought' from their (a)theological presuppositions or exhibit a tendency to politicize Kierkegaard's theology, I seek to demonstrate how the political dimensions of their thought flows from the (a)theological core of their respective *Weltanschauungen*. By attempting to formulate Kierkegaard's concept of power, I argue that, not only do the two thinkers respond to similar factors and identify similar crises in the waning authority of Christendom, but Kierkegaard also effectively anticipates and critiques Nietzsche's position.

The body of the project is divided into three main sections. The first section will present a summary of Nietzsche's cosmology, anthropology, and concept of power. The next section will articulate Kierkegaard's cosmology and anthropology before reconstructing his concept of power from diverse references throughout the pseudonymous authorship, religious writings, journals, and personal papers. The final section will attempt to compare and contrast the two perspectives under the auspices of a dialogical exchange. The conclusion will present the strengths and weaknesses of both positions and outline their implications and relevance for broader contemporary discourse on issues of power.

This project concludes that Kierkegaard's concept of power successfully withstands the challenges which Nietzsche's perspective raises, while exposing the precarious foundations upon which the latter is based. In particular, Kierkegaard demonstrates that the designations of 'master power' and 'slave power' are mythological constructs.

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<sup>5</sup> Letter from Nice, dated March 27, 1888. Cited in Brandes 76.

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## ABBREVIATIONS

### Søren Kierkegaard:

- BA *The Book on Adler*
- CA *The Concept of Anxiety: A Simple Psychologically Orienting Deliberation*
- CD *Christian Discourses: The Crisis and a Crisis in the Life of an Actress*
- CI *The Concept of Irony: With Continual Reference to Socrates*
- EO *Either/ Or*
- FS *For Self-Examination/ Judge For Yourself*
- FT *Fear and Trembling/ Repetition*
- JK *The Journals of Kierkegaard: 1834-1854*
- JP *Søren Kierkegaard's Journals and Papers (6 vols.)*
- PC *Practice in Christianity*
- PF *Philosophical Fragments/ Johannes Climacus, or De Omnibus Dubitandum Est*
- PV *The Point of View*
- SD *The Sickness Unto Death*
- SW *Stages on Life's Way: Studies by Various Persons*
- TA *Two Ages: The Age of Revolution and the Present Age: A Literary Review*
- TC *The Corsair Affair and Articles Related to the Writings*
- TM *The Moment and Late Writings*
- UD *Eighteen Upbuilding Discourses*
- UP *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*
- UV *Upbuilding Discourses in Various Spirits*
- WA *Without Authority: The Lily in the Field and the Birds of the Air*
- WL *Works of Love: Some Christian Reflections in the Form of Discourses (1962)*
- WL (revised) *Works of Love (1995)*

### Friedrich Nietzsche:

- BG *Beyond Good and Evil: Prelude to a Philosophy of the Future*
- BT *The Birth of Tragedy: Out of the Spirit of Music*
- EH *Ecce Homo: How One Becomes What One Is*
- GM *On the Genealogy of Morals: A Polemic*
- GS *The Gay Science: With a Prelude in Rhymes and an Appendix in Songs*
- HA *Human, All Too Human*
- NR *A Nietzsche Reader*
- TI *Twilight of the Idols/ The Antichrist*
- UM *Untimely Meditations*
- WP *The Will to Power*
- Z *Thus Spoke Zarathustra: A Book for Everyone and No One*

All citations contain page numbers of the English translations. Dates are given in square brackets for journal and notebook entries. All emphases are the writer's own.

## Chapter 1: Introduction: The Problem with Power:

### I. Is Power 'Unchristian'?

Throughout the twentieth century, humankind has been preoccupied with the notion of power.<sup>1</sup> In the wake of philosophers such as Friedrich Nietzsche and Michel Foucault, this theme has spanned the conceptual 'divide' between modernism and postmodernism, and has increasingly dominated such diverse academic fields as philosophy, economics, political science, English literature, anthropology, international relations, and the social sciences. Within the field of theology, much attention has been focused on power and its various manifestations within the world in general and the Christian Church in particular. This emphasis has been spearheaded by feminist, liberation, two-thirds world, and other theologians belonging to groups who have been historically marginalized from mainstream Christian scholarship. Much of the work done by feminist and liberation theologians concentrates on the historical treatment of and attitudes towards an identifiable group of 'disempowered' people, whom they usually represent. Theological responses to power can be loosely categorized under two headings: those which accept existing definitions and structural manifestations of power-- or at least leave them significantly unchanged-- seeking inversions and/ or inclusions within 'the powers that be'; and those who reject existing modes of power in search of a better or 'more Christian' approach.<sup>2</sup>

In the Stob Lectures of 1989-90, Christian philosopher Alvin Plantinga challenged his audience to reconsider the Christian/ non-Christian bifurcation of reality as it pertained to the area of academics: "Is there really such a thing as Christian scholarship-- or is there only scholarship *simpliciter*, which can be practiced by Christians and non-Christians, though perhaps practiced in a Christian and in a non-Christian way?"<sup>3</sup> Using Plantinga's poignant wording, the purpose of this project is to investigate whether there is such a thing

<sup>1</sup> The *Routledge Encyclopaedia of Philosophy* defines 'power' as "the capacity to produce or prevent change". [Green 610]

<sup>2</sup> Many of the latter focus on "mutual enhancement" [Ruether 30] or "enabling" [Fiorenza 143] models of power. See the brief overview in Johnson 270.

as 'Christian power'--or whether there is only 'power *simpliciter*', which may be exercised employing Christian and non-Christian methods towards explicitly Christian and non-Christian goals. To this end, this project will compare the respective concepts of power of two prominent thinkers, both of whom lived on the margins of nineteenth-century Christendom and were largely overlooked by their contemporaries. Both men were responding, in part, to a common threat-- the dissimulation of all personal power and individuality through Hegel's systematic banishment of particularity in the evolutionary self-actualization of Spirit.<sup>4</sup> And yet, although Friedrich Nietzsche attacked Christianity as one of the direst obstacles to personal freedom and power, another brilliant thinker, Søren Kierkegaard, regarded the Christian faith as the only true refuge for the sanctity and liberation of the individual.<sup>5</sup>

## II. The Two Dialogue Partners:

Nietzsche's thought has provided an integral contribution to modern discussions on the topic of power, a conversation which many feel he initiated.<sup>6</sup> However, this project will attempt to establish that Kierkegaard, facing similar pressures of Christendom's conformism, widespread spiritual lethargy, growing populist movements, and intellectual ostracism,<sup>7</sup> has equal claim as an authority on power. Part of the reason why Kierkegaard is easily overlooked in this regard is due to the non-systematic nature of his corpus. His concept of power is not consolidated in one or two books, but rather unfolds throughout his entire body of writings. Hence, a significant component of this project involves composing a holistic account of his concept of power. Although Kierkegaard never wrote a

---

<sup>3</sup> Plantinga 6.

<sup>4</sup> Hegel I 371. Another fascinating parallel is that both men prided themselves on their 'acting' abilities and the adoption of masks. See Salomé xviii: "If I were not such a good example of a play-actor, I could not bear to live another hour." Cf. PV 79, where Kierkegaard described "the equally great magnitude of my depression and of my dissimulative art". Safranski posits that Nietzsche's "imperative for self-configuration" led to his adoption of various epistemic 'masks' [26], though Clark suggests a strategy closer to Kierkegaard's pseudonyms: "He uses different affective stances [...] in order to show us features of reality that are visible from them." [850]

<sup>5</sup> Comparisons between Nietzsche and Kierkegaard are not novel. Brobjer acknowledges more than thirty studies which "extensively" examine them together. [252]

<sup>6</sup> Foucault *Religion* 96.

<sup>7</sup> Accordingly, both men regarded their thought as ahead of its time and, therefore, misunderstood by their contemporaries. See TM 101 and UM xlv.



comprehensive treatise on power, his entire life and corpus were diffused with issues concerning its uses and abuses. On the political front, in 1848, Denmark went to war with Prussia over two important duchies, and their eventual loss led to national and financial impoverishment.<sup>8</sup> That same year, under immense pressure from rising populist movements, the Danish king ended the traditional monarchy by inaugurating a constitutional monarchy. As a self-financed author<sup>9</sup> and monarchist,<sup>10</sup> Kierkegaard reeled from the impact of these momentous events.

On the cultural and intellectual front, Kierkegaard wrestled valiantly against the epistemological juggernaut of Hegelianism, an all-inclusive system which threatened to assimilate all forms of individual expression-- including faith-- within the bounds of reason. For Kierkegaard, this philosophical 'blitzkrieg' constituted an "objection against Christianity".<sup>11</sup> Climacus disdainfully described this systematic violence as being "world-historically butchered, salted, and packed in a paragraph".<sup>12</sup> Although Kierkegaard was not opposed to logic or logical systems as such, he mounted a blistering offensive against those that presumed to encapsulate all of existence.<sup>13</sup>

The political, economic, and philosophical 'power surges' during this period were paralleled by similar upheavals within the state church. Had he believed that unawareness of Christian truth was the main problem plaguing the nineteenth-century Protestant church, Kierkegaard would likely have prescribed widespread dissemination of Christian teachings. Instead, he believed that the real problem was not ignorance of the truth but an

<sup>8</sup> CD xi. He also was keenly aware of the upheavals in France. Westphal argues persuasively that Kierkegaard's political perspective was not merely a response to 1848 but developed over the course of his writing career. ["Politics" 325] The tumultuous events of 1848 also exerted a monumental impact on 4-year-old Nietzsche, whose father, Pastor Karl Ludwig Nietzsche, a staunch monarchist who named his son after King Friedrich Wilhelm IV of Prussia, grew "extremely despondent" following the political upheavals and died the following year. [Salomé xii] Interestingly, Kierkegaard was born in 1813, the same year as Richard Wagner and Nietzsche's father.

<sup>9</sup> PV 207 [1849]: "In a matter of months I was in the situation where tomorrow, perhaps, I would not own a thing but be literally in financial straits. It was a severe drain on me. My spirit reacted all the more strongly. I wrote more than ever, but more than ever like a dying man."

<sup>10</sup> Kierkegaard once instructed King Christian VIII on the threat of communism and how to be a king. See JK 155-157 [1849].

<sup>11</sup> WL 11.

<sup>12</sup> UP I 107.

<sup>13</sup> See UP I 109: "[A] logical system can be given [...] but a system of existence cannot be given."

active rebellion against truth that was known to all. Subsequently, authority became a pivotal issue within Kierkegaard's polemical attack on the Danish church.<sup>14</sup> He regarded the institutional church's growing political power and subsequent loss of spiritual authority with increasing dismay, and bitterly opposed the squelching of personal risk-taking and sacrifice by the oppressive conformity of false communitarianism which had blighted Western Europe.

Kierkegaard's familiarity with power dynamics on macroscopic levels was accompanied by tremendous conflict and confrontation on a personal level. In addition to the guilt and fear which his profoundly devout but melancholic father had indelibly imprinted upon his childhood,<sup>15</sup> Kierkegaard's aloofness, pride, and eccentricities made him an irresistible target in one of the earliest and most celebrated examples of character assassination by the media. By bravely confronting the tyranny of *The Corsair*, whose slanderous accusations were protected from legalities by anonymous journalism, Kierkegaard unleashed an unrelenting onslaught of written and illustrated caricatures against himself.<sup>16</sup> As Walter Hong observed, the attack was devastatingly effective due to the "power of an unprecedented kind of journalism in a small city of 125,000 and the uncommon sensitivity of the object of the personal attack."<sup>17</sup> By the time it was over, the media circus had inspired no fewer than three Scandinavian plays featuring buffoon-like characters named 'Søren', and Kierkegaard could no longer walk the streets of his beloved city in peace-- one of his favourite and most fruitful pastimes--<sup>18</sup> without being heckled by the people or mobbed by flocks of mocking children.

<sup>14</sup> See Hong's sizable list of references to authority within Kierkegaard's writing. [BA viii]

<sup>15</sup> Kierkegaard once mused, "As a child, I was rigorously and earnestly brought up in Christianity, insanelly brought up, humanly speaking [...]" [PV 79] Kirmmse also describes the lifelong struggle between the 'little brother' and the eldest brother, Peter. ["Out" 35] Perkins observes that Kierkegaard's first publication was an ironic article on women's emancipation. ["Politics" 33]

<sup>16</sup> Kierkegaard emphasized that his decision to oppose the rising media power of *The Corsair* was carefully calculated: "As for myself, I believe that I have specific qualifications for this. I am single, I have no wife to grieve [...]" [TC 174 (1846)]

<sup>17</sup> TC xxxi. The unkindest cut of all was indubitably not that of his trouser-legs. Over the better part of a year, this shameless assault lambasted everything, including his imagined treatment of women, his physical posture (the capital-K-like crease in his back caused by a spinal injury he suffered as a child), his supposed 'God-like' supremacy placing himself in the centre of the cosmos around which everything revolved, and even the length of his trousers.

<sup>18</sup> See WL [revised] 474-475 [1847]: "I have walked myself into my best thoughts, and I know of no thought so burdensome that one cannot walk away from it."

Following the furor, his public feud and ostracism by the Danish church accelerated after the death of Bishop Mynster. Kierkegaard's own death ended a sophisticated polemical counter-offensive that incorporated irony, pseudonymous authors, and vigorous intellectual scrutiny.<sup>19</sup> All this time, Kierkegaard struggled to reconcile his physical and psychological torments with his Christian faith in a loving God. Mustering all of his considerable energies, he fought to come to grips with the foundational paradox of Christianity, the Incarnation-- the greatest display of divine power which the world has never seen-- and the radical impact which occurs when the rationality of the 'autonomous' individual experiences a 'head-on collision' with this divine truth. When he finally succumbed to his weakened constitution in 1855, Kierkegaard died a publicly and privately battle-scarred man. On account of all of these factors, Kierkegaard was spectacularly well-acquainted with the uses and abuses of power and offers an extremely valuable and vital contribution to the ongoing discussion.

### III. Preliminary Considerations:

#### A. Towards a Provisional Definition of Power:

In Kierkegaard's seminal discourse, "Purity of Heart is to Will One Thing", power may be defined as 'the ability to implement one's desires, protect one's interests, or attain one's ends.'<sup>20</sup> As such, power includes intellectual, spiritual, emotional, and not merely physical means.<sup>21</sup> Nietzsche would apparently concur, though he would add that the drive or instinct to exert and extend one's power constitutes the foundation for all life and organic growth.<sup>22</sup> As such, all cultural endeavours, ethical or religious enterprises, societal institutions, and personal involvements are reflections of power. According to Nietzsche, power is autonomous, amoral, self-serving, and innovative. In an elegy to architecture as

<sup>19</sup> He was primarily inspired by Socrates' intellectual dismemberment of the Sophists of his day.

<sup>20</sup> UV 32.

<sup>21</sup> Hence, Nietzsche distinguished *Macht* as "power of higher quality and greater vitality" from *Kraft* ("physical force"). [Golomb "Authenticity" 244] For the word's 'constructive' overtones with *machen*, see Schacht 225. See also Habermas 95.

<sup>22</sup> Nietzsche's view is somewhat amorphous, as reflected by passages where the will to power is one of



the purest aesthetic expression of power, he asserted,

The highest feeling of power and security finds expression in that which possesses *grand style*. Power which no longer requires proving; which disdains to please; which is slow to answer; which is conscious of no witness around it; which lives oblivious of the existence of any opposition; which reposes in *itself*, fatalistic, a law among laws: *that* is what speaks of itself in the form of grand style.<sup>23</sup>

The ability to accomplish one's chosen task is juxtaposed by what might be provisionally labelled 'authority': the ability or right to will the task which is to be accomplished. Kierkegaard employed the analogy of a carriage and driver: while the 'horses' serve as the locus of power, the will serves as the 'driver.' Just as the driver can lose control by allowing the diverse elements of power to dissipate through lack of coordination,

so also are we distressed to see the same thing happen to a human being. He does not lack power-- a person never really does-- but he mismanages himself. The person who is to be the master (it is, of course, he himself) ruins it; such a person works with perhaps scarcely a third of his power in the right place and with more than two-thirds of his power in the wrong place or against himself. Now he gives up working in order to begin to deliberate all over again, now he works instead of deliberating, now he pulls on the reins in the wrong way, now he wants to do both at the same time-- and during all this he does not move from the spot [...] Ah, if one looks at people's lives, one often must say in sorrow: They do not themselves know what powers they have; they more or less keep themselves from finding that out, because they are using most of their powers to work against themselves.<sup>24</sup>

Hence, Kierkegaard concluded that power is powerless without the authority to harness and direct it properly.

#### B. Chapter Outline:

It is a tantalizing mystery as to how well Nietzsche knew Kierkegaard's writings, who died when Nietzsche was ten years old. Hollingdale contends that a diatribe against "afterworldsmen" in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* contains several clues which suggest that

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several "grand affects". See, for example, WP 62 [1887].

<sup>23</sup> TI 85.

<sup>24</sup> UV 295-296.

Nietzsche was repudiating Kierkegaard's philosophy.<sup>25</sup> In a letter from Georg Brandes, dated January 11<sup>th</sup>, 1888, the Danish scholar wrote: "There is a Nordic writer whose works would interest you. *Soren Kierkegaard*; he lived 1813-1855 and is in my view one of the most profound psychologists of all time [...]"<sup>26</sup> On February 19<sup>th</sup>, Nietzsche responded: "I have decided that during my next trip to Germany I want to study the psychological problem of Kierkegaard [...]", but Kaufmann adds, "[H]e never got around to reading Kierkegaard."<sup>27</sup> Consequently, any engagement between the two writers will necessarily be an imaginative reconstruction,<sup>28</sup> but one that will provide a fruitful cross-pollination on the topic of power while respecting and retaining the integrity of each man's original thought.

Because Nietzsche's concept of power is comparatively more formulated and familiar than Kierkegaard's, his position will be examined first in order to serve as a springboard and counterpoint to Kierkegaard's view. This order is also intended to highlight the extraordinary precision with which Kierkegaard anticipated and countered the latter's point of view. Chapters 2 and 3 will explicate Nietzsche's concept of power within the broader context of his thought. Chapters 4 and 5 will reconstruct Kierkegaard's understanding of power from the multitudinous fragments and references which proliferate his corpus. Chapters 6 and 7 will then compare the two concepts of power. The final chapter will contain a brief summary of the strengths and weaknesses of both perspectives and articulate their relevance for contemporary discussion on issues of power. The thesis statement of this project is that Kierkegaard's theory of power is more coherent and consistent than Nietzsche's position, which he foresaw and forswore with uncanny accuracy.

<sup>25</sup> Hollingdale argues that one statement in particular, "Weariness, which wants to reach the ultimate with a single leap, with a death-leap, a poor ignorant weariness, which no longer wants even to want: that created all gods and afterworlds" [Z 59], strongly alludes to Kierkegaard, "who advocated a return to Christianity by means of a 'leap' from unbelief into belief" [Z 339 n. 6]

<sup>26</sup> Brandes 69.

<sup>27</sup> WP 53 n. 48. In a recent article, Brobjer lists six books which would have exposed Nietzsche to key tenets of Kierkegaard's thought. [253]

<sup>28</sup> In addition to the similarities of historical and cultural context, such a dialogue is informed by the attitudes both men displayed when interacting with the other's intellectual 'kindred spirits': Kierkegaard's engagement with Feuerbach and the 'free-thinkers', and Nietzsche's response to Pascal.

#### IV. Methodological Limitations:

##### A. Scope:

In *The Gay Science*, Nietzsche exclaimed, “[T]here are truths that are singularly shy and ticklish and cannot be caught except suddenly-- that must be *surprised* or left alone.”<sup>29</sup> Both Nietzsche and Kierkegaard shared a remarkable sensitivity and child-like wonder towards the subtle complexities of existence. Subsequently, they employed a rich array of narrative strategies and techniques to portray its iridescent ‘flutterings’ without impaling its intricate dynamics within the intellectual ‘display cases’ of abstract thought. On account of their sophisticated analyses and creative formats, this project will focus exclusively on primary sources, both published and unpublished during the writers’ lifetimes. Although this strategy is intended to provide a holistic account of their concepts of power, this approach invites certain risks. Some scholars, such as Michael Tanner, contend that the amorphous and fragmentary nature of Nietzsche’s writing seriously jeopardizes any attempt to construct a coherent account of his cosmology or anthropology.<sup>30</sup> Others, like Walter Kaufmann, warn of the editorial tampering which transpired when Nietzsche’s notebooks were published by his anti-Semitic sister, Elisabeth Forster-Nietzsche.<sup>31</sup> However, rather than abandon the *Nachlass* altogether, Kaufmann cogently suggests that they can offer great insights by allowing glimpses into “the

<sup>29</sup> GS 345.

<sup>30</sup> See Löwith 192 and Tanner *Nietzsche* 4, 64. Nevertheless, Tanner posits that it is possible to trace “the underlying unity of his concerns”. [8] There is widespread disagreement on the degree to which Nietzsche’s perspective shifted during his life. Clark contends that motifs such as ‘will to power’, eternal recurrence, and the *Übermensch* were downplayed and/ or abandoned towards the end of his career. [856-859] By contrast, Mandelbaum argues that, “there was a considerable degree of unity in Nietzsche’s thought”, [338] while Nietzsche’s former companion, Lou Salomé, observes “clearly worked out lines of a ‘system’” in his thought. [Salomé xi] See also Houlgate *Hegel* 38, 54, and Davey 142. In a letter to his publishers in the mid-1880s, Nietzsche wrote: “I now need profound tranquility, for many, many years to come, because I am facing the elaboration of my entire system of thought [...]” [Safranski 158] As late as March 24, 1887, Nietzsche felt compelled “to build up a coherent structure of thought over the next few years”. [Safranski 284] Houlgate states that, although Nietzsche “cannot develop an ontology”, he “sketches a hypothetical ontology using the scientific notion of force (*Kraft*) and the analogy of human will” [*Hegel* 60] Richardson, however, insists that Nietzsche retains all of the categories and structures integral to an ontology. [65] On Nietzsche’s ‘essentialism’ and ‘foundationalism’, see Houlgate “Power” 123. On his “metaphysics of conflict”, see Burkitt 63 and Ansell-Pearson 161.

<sup>31</sup> For a useful synopsis, see WP xiii-xv. Tanner states that these “undeveloped” thoughts allow unscrupulous interpreters to project their own thoughts into his writing. [*Nietzsche* 5]

workshop of a great thinker".<sup>32</sup>

The situation with Kierkegaard is, likewise, complicated on account of the rather contested relation between his pseudonymous writings and his signed works. He himself forbade readers from attributing pseudonymous quotations to himself.<sup>33</sup> Furthermore, scholars have argued that his use of irony and hyperbolic polemics similarly frustrate any attempts to elucidate his 'true' position on a given topic.<sup>34</sup> However, Kierkegaard also regarded his authorship as a coherent whole under the direction of 'religious' concerns, and was careful to maintain a balance between pseudonymous publications and 'directly' authored works.<sup>35</sup> He once predicted that there would be no completed analysis of his work during his lifetime, "for no one has sufficient faith in it, or time or competence to look for a comprehensive plan in the entire production."<sup>36</sup> Though the pseudonyms personify perspectives which Kierkegaard did not personally endorse, as Murray Rae writes, "[W]e should not assume that there is nothing in the pseudonymous works to which Kierkegaard himself might consent."<sup>37</sup> In response to the aforementioned scholarly concerns, I will endeavour to support unpublished or pseudonymous statements with citations from published or signed works when possible, in order to emphasize the continuity of thought in each man's corpus.<sup>38</sup> Moreover, this approach respects both writers' expressed desire to

<sup>32</sup> WP xvi. See also Clark 848.

<sup>33</sup> FS 240-241 [1851], UP I 625, TC 5.

<sup>34</sup> Hence, Poole criticizes a "blunt reading" which reduces Kierkegaard to didactic, propositional truth-statements and downplays the ironic, dialectical, and playful dimensions of his writing. [60-61] Clearly one must steer a central course between systematized atrophy and deconstructive 'misreadings'. Westphal observes, "Those who stress the postmodern tendencies in Kierkegaard usually want to filter out the religious element, while those who emphasize the religious heart of his writings are, for this very reason, usually leery of linking him with postmodernism." ["Hegel" 121 n. 1] Dooley illuminates how the argument for Kierkegaard's 'postmodernity' revolves upon whether one views deconstruction as his methodological innovation or rather the offshoot of German romanticism, which he opposed. [152] See also Norris 87-90. Evans contends, "He seems 'postmodern' in his account of knowledge, yet 'modern' or really 'premodern' in his understanding of faith." ["Realism" 169]

<sup>35</sup> FS ix, PV 6-7, 30; CD 415 [1848]. Kierkegaard, however, admitted that he did not possess this comprehensive understanding of his authorship at the time of writing the early pseudonymous works. [UP II 166-167 (1850)] Gardiner doubts whether his initial purposes for writing were as straightforward as purported in his overview. [Kierkegaard 43] For a contrasting view, see Plekon "Theologian" 3, and Pletsch 169.

<sup>36</sup> BA 323 [February 19, 1849].

<sup>37</sup> Rae x. See also Evans *Fragments* 7. Gardiner contends that pseudonymous books where he appears as editor "expressed views that were basically his own." ["Kierkegaard" 240]

<sup>38</sup> In light of his importance to the present topic, a brief clarification is necessary for the pseudonym H. H., 'author' of "Two Ethical-Religious Essays", which Kierkegaard was reluctant to include within his



sentence their readers to hermeneutical 'hard labour' and invite them to participate in rigorous engagement with their texts.<sup>39</sup>

Finally, it is important to reiterate that this project focuses primarily upon the writings of Nietzsche and Kierkegaard themselves. It in no way purports to undertake a comprehensive overview of the staggering plethora of secondary material on these vastly popular thinkers.<sup>40</sup> Rather, it is a concerted attempt to crystallize the core concepts behind their respective understanding of power and contrast their strengths and weaknesses via a creative dialogue between the two perspectives. This endeavour will hopefully illuminate issues of authority within contemporary debate and enhance our theological understanding of power. In particular, this project seeks to augment the tremendous insights presented by Kierkegaard, whose thought has only recently been explored with regards to socio-political concerns, by providing a comprehensive reconstruction of Kierkegaard's concept of power.

#### B. Structure:

In light of the rich complexities and organic nature of the thought-worlds of two tried and tested anti-systematicians such as Nietzsche and Kierkegaard,<sup>41</sup> it is impossible to impose a systematic framework without accusations of theoretical violence and arbitrary dissection. For the purposes of analysis, I have adopted a three-tiered structure. The cosmological tier will address the overall workings of the universe at large, according to each man. In the anthropological tier, the focus will then concentrate more specifically on

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'authentic' canon. [WA xv] Kierkegaard explained that his reluctance stemmed not from fundamental disagreement with H. H.'s perspective, but through misgivings that readers may misinterpret him to be presenting himself as an 'apostle' rather than a 'genius'. [WA 237-240 (1849)] Kierkegaard wrote of H. H.: "He rightly understood and explained perhaps the most important ethical-religious concept: authority." [cited in Dunning 19]

<sup>39</sup> One of Kierkegaard's favourite images for the truth-seeker was that of a relentless detective pursuing his quarry. See TM 130, UP I 239, TA 80, SW 311. For the hermeneutical demands which Nietzsche's aphorisms place upon readers, see Z 67 and GM 10.

<sup>40</sup> Tanner claims of Nietzsche that "more books appear on him each year than on any other thinker". [Nietzsche 2]

<sup>41</sup> Cf. UP I 107, cited above, with TI 35: "I mistrust all systematizers and avoid them. The will to a system is a lack of integrity." Löwith warns: "Because Nietzsche develops his thought in a thousand aphorisms and not as a system, one can find in him in particular whatever one wishes: matters startlingly timely and matters

how humankind fits within this broader context. Finally, each man's concept of power will be further examined in the tier of authority. The inadequacies of this model are readily apparent, since certain articulations on the nature of power-- such as Nietzsche's principle of universal conflict, or Kierkegaard's account of the Incarnation-- could easily be included under all three categories. However, the purpose of this structure is two-fold: first, to underscore the importance of situating their statements upon power within the broader context of their (a)theological world views in order to gain a deeper understanding of the subtleties and elegance of their thinking and, in the case of Kierkegaard, to avoid politicizing his theology; second, to illustrate how vitally the topic of power resonates within their corpora at all levels. Due to the organic, almost nodal nature of their thought-worlds, the investigation will often proceed in a spiralling rather than strictly linear progression in an attempt to preserve the reticular interconnectedness of their concepts with a minimum of repetition.<sup>42</sup> The three-fold structure will hopefully admit greater insights than impediments into comprehending the writings of these two extraordinary thinkers.

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amazingly untimely." [192]

<sup>42</sup> Although, given the predominance of repetition/ recurrence in their thinking, this may be somewhat apropos.

## Chapter 2: For the Taking: Nietzsche's View of the Universe:

### I. The Cosmological Tier:

#### A. Nietzsche's 'Natural' Monism:<sup>43</sup>

The theme of power fulminates throughout the entirety of Nietzsche's thought and attains key prominence in the articulation of his cosmology. The fundamental tenet of Nietzsche's view of the universe is literally, 'What you see is what you get:' the natural universe in all of its wondrous beauty is all there is to behold or be held. Nietzsche vociferously denied the existence of any divine creator, higher metaphysical reality,<sup>44</sup> or implicit structure in the universe-- whether moral or otherwise-- because, "[N]ature is always value-less".<sup>45</sup> Hence, he insisted, "There are no moral phenomena at all, only a moral interpretation of phenomena..."<sup>46</sup> Truth itself is a human construct, a 'necessary lie' which enables humans to project their own standards of order upon an essentially amoral universe, an equally enchanting yet foreboding environment which remains majestically indifferent to human existence: "Think of a being such as nature is, prodigal beyond measure, indifferent beyond measure, without mercy or justice, at once fruitful and barren and uncertain [...]"<sup>47</sup> *Homo sapiens* thus becomes "*homo hermeneuticus*".<sup>48</sup>

<sup>43</sup> Houlgate observes that Nietzsche rejects monism in so far as it posits a "comprehensive unity" [*übergreifende Einheit*], but espouses it as an expression of the "wholeness" of the universe. [*Hegel* 42]

<sup>44</sup> Such assertions inevitably devalue the natural universe and entail deplorable escapism for Nietzsche, who condemned "those perverse wizards who, instead of creating the world out of nothing, create nothing out of the world." [HA 259] Nietzsche echoed the words of Goethe-- "Stinted things, self-mortifying,/ Making life a means of dying."--- [Goethe II 94] and Feuerbach 161: "Where the heavenly life is a truth, the earthly life is a lie; where imagination is all, reality is nothing. To him who believes in an eternal heavenly life, the present life loses its value [...]" It has been rigorously debated whether Nietzsche is, in fact, the 'last metaphysician' or the first post-metaphysician. See Richardson 5-6 and Pippin 252-278.

<sup>45</sup> GS 242. See also HA 16. For the development of Nietzsche's naturalism, see Clark 847.

<sup>46</sup> BG 96. Cf. Feuerbach 81: "This cosmogonical process is nothing else than the mystic paraphrase of a psychological process [...]"

<sup>47</sup> BG 39. Thus Zarathustra derided the 'truth-tellers' of society: "You first want to *make* all being conceivable: for, with a healthy mistrust, you doubt whether it is in fact conceivable. But it must bend and accommodate itself to you! Thus will your mind have it [...]. That is your entire will, you wisest of men; it is a will to power; and that is so even when you talk of good and evil and of the assessment of values." [Z 136] It is evident to the critic that 'nature' becomes a useful polemical construct for Nietzsche. His own anthropomorphization of nature is manifest in statements like UM 221: "Nature is in its depths much richer, mightier, happier, more dreadful [...]" See also UM 76, where he described 'life' as "that dark, driving power that insatiably thirsts for itself."

<sup>48</sup> Carr 87. For nihilism as "hermeneutical malaise", see Carr 88.

Furthermore, Nietzsche deprivileged humankind as the pinnacle of this monistic universe, who receives no preferential smiles of affection from "the cruel and desolate face of nature".<sup>49</sup>

Man is absolutely not the crown of creation: every creature stands beside him at the same stage of perfection.... And even in asserting that we assert too much: man is, relatively speaking, the most unsuccessful animal, the sickliest, the one most dangerously strayed from its instincts-- with all that, to be sure, the most *interesting*.<sup>50</sup>

Against a world devoid of providential guidance or teleological progress, human culture in general and philosophy in particular launch their brave formulations, striving to bind nature to will: "[P]hilosophy is this tyrannical drive itself, the most spiritual will to power, to 'creation of the world', to *causa prima*."<sup>51</sup> Notions of metaphysics and 'truth' represent previous human attempts to gain mastery, all of which must be constantly challenged and overcome in order to expand human potential. In a very real sense, cosmology must elide into anthropology, according to Nietzsche:

[T]hat every elevation of man brings with it the overcoming of narrower interpretations; that every strengthening and increase of power opens up new perspectives and means believing in new horizons-- this idea permeates my writings. The world with which we are concerned is false, i.e., is not a fact but a fable and approximation on the basis of a meager sum of observations; it is 'in flux', as something in a state of becoming, as a falsehood always changing but never getting near the truth: for-- there is no 'truth'.<sup>52</sup>

Even science falls under Nietzsche's censure:

We operate only with things that do not exist: lines, planes, bodies, atoms, divisible time spans, divisible spaces. How should explanations be at all possible when we first turn everything into an *image*, our image! It will do to consider

<sup>49</sup> UM 149.

<sup>50</sup> TI 136. See also WP 169 [1888]: "[M]an a little, eccentric species of animal, which-- fortunately-- has its day [...] something of no importance to the general character of the earth [...]" Nietzsche did not, however want to denigrate humankind to mere animal status, since humans alone seek to perfect the species by "conscious willing". [UM 164] He criticized Schopenhauer for this excess in WP [1887] 52:

"Schopenhauer's basic misunderstanding of the *will* (as if craving, instinct, drive were the *essence* of will is typical: lowering the value of the will to the point of making a real mistake [...]) Great symptom of the *exhaustion* or the *weakness* of the *will*: for the will is precisely that which treats cravings as their master and appoints to them their way and measure." A wholesale rejection of humankind would have veered too perilously close to Christianity's 'defamation' of the species, as reflected by Calderón de la Barca's [1600-1681] dogmatic declaration that "the greatest guilt of man is that he was born." [HA 98]

<sup>51</sup> BG 39.

<sup>52</sup> WP 330 [1885-1886].



science as an attempt to humanize things as faithfully as possible [....]<sup>53</sup>

He once complained that faith in a rationally constructed, coherent universe brings the scientist uncomfortably close to the role of 'shaman' since, "The thinking of men who believe in magic and miracles is bent on *imposing a law on nature* [....]"<sup>54</sup> Subsequently, he advised, "Let us beware of saying that there are laws in nature. There are only necessities: there is nobody who commands, nobody who obeys, nobody who trespasses."<sup>55</sup>

Such a cosmos constitutes a realm of terror and uncertainty for the weak, but a veritable playground for the 'gods.'<sup>56</sup> God himself, however, remains a chimerical projection, whose death is famously celebrated in Nietzsche's "Parable of the Madman": "God is dead. God remains dead. And we have killed him."<sup>57</sup> By this, he meant that the idea of God is becoming no longer tenable, though this radical notion is only just "beginning to cast its first shadows over Europe".<sup>58</sup> Although Nietzsche commended the Greek and Roman pantheons as reflections of 'healthy' human self-confidence and self-projection,<sup>59</sup> he vehemently attacked the nonsensical banalities of the Christian God, who supersedes and simultaneously devalues the material world, and denigrates humankind's natural powers:

A god who conceives children with a mortal woman; a wise man who calls upon us to work no more, to judge no more, but to heed the signs of the imminent

<sup>53</sup> GS 172-173. A primary, underlying concern was that scientific presuppositions of natural order implied the existence of a universal 'law-giver.' Hence, "I beware of speaking of chemical 'laws': that savors of morality." [WP 336 (1885)]

<sup>54</sup> HA 82.

<sup>55</sup> GS 168. Nietzsche employed the notion of 'necessity' with extreme caution to avoid implying an implicit imperative within nature. His teleological queasiness over the term is evident in WP 229-300 [1887]: "That the apparent 'purposiveness' ('that purposiveness which endlessly surpasses all the arts of man') is merely the consequence of the will to power manifest in all events; that becoming stronger involves an ordering process which looks like a sketchy purposiveness; that apparent ends are not intentional but as soon as dominion is established over a lesser power and the latter operates as a function of the greater power, an order of rank, of organization is bound to produce the appearance of an order of means and ends. Against apparent 'necessity':-- that is only an expression for the fact that a force is not also something else. Against apparent 'purposiveness':-- the latter only an expression for an order of spheres of power and their interplay."

<sup>56</sup> For Nietzsche's rejection of a correspondence theory of truth in favour of epistemological courage, see Mandelbaum 341.

<sup>57</sup> GS 181. Nietzsche took credit for his active role in this 'theocide': "Truly, I myself do not believe that anyone has ever looked into the world with such deep suspicion, and not only as an occasional devil's advocate, but every bit as much, to speak theology, as an enemy and challenger of God." [HA 4]

<sup>58</sup> GS 279.

<sup>59</sup> HA 85; GS 195. He noted that the concept of pantheon itself reflected a cultural embrace of diversity as opposed to the homogenizing tyranny of monotheism.

apocalypse; a justice that accepts the innocent man as a proxy sacrifice; someone who has his disciple drink his blood; prayers for miraculous interventions; sins against a god, atoned for by a god; fear of the afterlife, to which death is the gate; the figure of the cross as a symbol, in a time that no longer knows the purpose and shame of the cross-- how horridly all this wafts over us, as from the grave of the ancient past! Are we to believe that such things are still believed?<sup>60</sup>

In contrast to the chaotic vitality of the Greek gods, "these child-minds with the courage of lions",<sup>61</sup> Nietzsche deplored a God who ruled over every jot and tittle of the universe-- "some spider of finality and morality which is supposed to exist behind the great net and web of causality"--<sup>62</sup> while pandering to the slavish whims of the plebeian masses: "What sets *us* apart is not that we recognize no God, either in history or in nature or behind nature-- but that we find that which has been revered as God not 'godlike' but pitiable, absurd, harmful, not merely an error but a *crime against life*...."<sup>63</sup> In place of a disembodied "spiritualized God", reflecting humanity's vain attempts to devalue the 'evil' world of nature, Nietzsche lauded the Hellenistic anthropomorphized deities which were forged by "the Greeks of the strongest epoch, who were not afraid of themselves but rejoiced in themselves, brought their gods close to all their own affects--."<sup>64</sup> Although the idea of 'God' as a self-celebration of 'master' values would prove useful to his philosophical project, Nietzsche possessed no personal belief in a transcendent deity. Hence, in his 'autobiography', *Ecce Homo*, Nietzsche wrote: "I have absolutely no knowledge of atheism as an outcome of reasoning, still less as an event: with me it is obvious by instinct."<sup>65</sup>

<sup>60</sup> HA 84-85. In a notebook entry, he outlined three distinct stages in human development. The Classical or Pagan Stage reflects the life-enhancing celebration of the natural instincts, the "expression of the 'will to power' itself". The Idealist Stage drains the natural world of meaning in an attempt to confine the instincts within ethical restraints. The Decadent Stage negates the natural world entirely, projecting the ideal into the 'anti-natural' realm of the afterlife. He located Christianity midway between the second and third stage. [WP 187 (1887-1888)]

<sup>61</sup> GM 74.

<sup>62</sup> GM 92. Nietzsche criticized the arbitrariness of formulations of causality: "Before the effect one believes in different causes than one does afterward." [GS 210] See also HA 22 on causes as *a posteriori* imaginings.

<sup>63</sup> TI 174-175. He lambasted the 'divine domicile' in TI 182: "Even the slightest trace of piety in us ought to make us feel that a God who cures a head cold at the right moment or tells us to get into a coach just as a downpour is about to start is so absurd a God he would have to be abolished even if he existed. A God as a domestic servant, as a postman, as an almanac-maker-- at bottom a word for the stupidest kind of accidental occurrence...."

<sup>64</sup> WP 308 [1888].

## B. Space: Nature's *Telos*:

In place of belief in a fictitious deity, Nietzsche advocated an ecstatic embrace of the natural world in its entirety. This closed universe did not possess 'laws', 'principles', 'purposes', or other value-laden 'facts' as such. He contended:

[T]his entire teleology is predicated on the ability to speak about man of the last four thousand years as if he were eternal, the natural direction of all things in the world from the beginning. But everything has evolved: there are *no eternal facts*, nor are there any absolute truths. Thus *historical philosophizing* is necessary henceforth, and the virtue of modesty as well.<sup>65</sup>

Humankind must, therefore, become accustomed to the role of a "wanderer" who delights in "change and transitoriness", instead of "a traveller *towards* a final goal, for this does not exist."<sup>67</sup> According to Nietzsche, no element in the natural universe is stable or static in itself: everything is in a perpetual state of flux-- changing, growing, destroying or being destroyed.<sup>68</sup> And so it ought to be, he exclaimed, once a person grasped the 'Dionysian' truth that the natural order is in constant spin, producing astonishing new configurations and then indifferently smashing them into atoms while engendering an infinite array of alternatives. The universe offers no preferential treatment to humans, who are merely swept up in the "*bellum omnium contra omnes*"-- 'the war of all against all.'<sup>69</sup> Unlike classical notions of fate, which accepted such cosmic 'cruelty' with an air of noble resignation and/ or tragedy, Nietzsche regarded this 'reality' as a cause for celebration-- "the will of life rejoicing in its own inexhaustibility through the *sacrifice* of its highest

<sup>65</sup> EH 21.

<sup>66</sup> HA 14-15. For parallels with Democritus, see Safranski 150-152.

<sup>67</sup> HA 266. Nietzsche employed the metaphor of drama to denounce the 'unhealthy' fixation upon 'ends': "If the value of a drama lay solely in its conclusion, the drama itself would be merely the worst wearisome and indirect way possible of reaching this goal." [UM 92] For the fecund suggestion of Nietzsche's epistemological 'homelessness', see Salomé 15.

<sup>68</sup> Nietzsche was influenced by Heraclitus in these matters. [UM 242] For a summary of Nietzsche's views on the pre-Socratics, see Strong 152-161.

<sup>69</sup> UM 30. See also UM 214. For parallels with Hobbes, see Zeitlin 11 and Safranski 71. Unlike Hobbes, however, power for Nietzsche constitutes an end in itself. See Ansell-Pearson 48. One commentator observes: "In his philological studies Nietzsche concentrated on the agon (the contest)". [Bergmann 4] In this, Nietzsche proved to be a child of his time. For parallels with "the militarist spirit of his age", see Bergmann 180, though Nietzsche assiduously stripped such themes of their nationalistic and particularist overtones. Like Empedocles, Nietzsche, too, could claim, "I trusted in mad Strife [...]" [Barnes 194] When he was only seventeen, he wrote: "Strife is the perpetual food of the soul." [Hollingdale *Nietzsche* 109]

types".<sup>70</sup> The strange vicissitudes and variances recorded by human history reinforced for Nietzsche that humankind is simply a product of nature:

But the strange fact is that all there is or has been on earth of freedom, subtlety, boldness, dance and masterly certainty, whether in thinking, or in ruling, or in speaking and persuasion, in the arts as in morals, has evolved only by virtue of the 'tyranny of such arbitrary laws'; and, in all seriousness, there is no small probability that precisely this is 'nature' and 'natural'.<sup>71</sup>

However, Nietzsche did not banish all traces of teleology from his world view--merely those teleologies which contradicted the observably 'natural' universe.<sup>72</sup> In a notebook entry, he once stated that an accurate theory must account for the universe in its entirety: "In order to understand what 'life' is, what kind of striving and tension life is, the formula must apply as well to trees and plants as to animals."<sup>73</sup> The German philosopher fervently argued that the will to power, the intractable desire to expand one's boundaries against the holdings of all others, constitutes the necessary foundation of life: "Life itself is *essentially* appropriation, injury, overpowering of the strange and weaker, suppression, severity, imposition of one's own forms, incorporation and, at the least and mildest, exploitation [...]"<sup>74</sup> Nietzsche carefully qualified the amorality of this 'exploitation': "'Exploitation' does not pertain to a corrupt or imperfect or primitive society: it pertains to the *essence* of the living thing as a fundamental organic function, it is a consequence of the intrinsic will to power which is precisely the will to life."<sup>75</sup>

<sup>70</sup> EH 50. Even the *Übermensch* was subject to this intractable 'rule' of nature: "A people is a detour of nature to get to six or seven great men.-- Yes: and then to get round them." [BG 99]

<sup>71</sup> BG 110.

<sup>72</sup> See Kain 136.

<sup>73</sup> WP 374 [1887-1888].

<sup>74</sup> BG 194.

<sup>75</sup> BG 194. One might cannily adduce the world of Nietzsche scholarship to verify the agonistic nature of the cosmos-- for every scholarly reaction there is an equal and opposite reaction! Houlgate writes: "[T]here is overwhelming evidence that Nietzsche rejected the idea that will to power constitutes a unified monistic principle", maintaining that such a formulation would reek of metaphysics and veer towards Hegel's unholy *Geist*. [Hegel 66] Thus, he regards it as "an anthropomorphic metaphor for what Nietzsche calls the 'pathos' within existing forces". See also Kaufmann *Nietzsche* 420. In a later article, Houlgate objects to the 'domestication' of Nietzsche's terms when they are regarded as 'open' metaphors, resulting in an authorial self-negation and empowerment of the reader's response which Nietzsche would have deplored. ["Power" 122] Most traditional scholarship devotes major sections to the "pivotal notion" of will to power. [Golomb "Nietzsche" 244] See also Burkitt 65, and Safranski 185, where he avers, "The ominous 'will to power' [...] builds up to a cosmic explanation and directive of grand-scale politics in Nietzsche's later years". Foucault credits Nietzsche with 'specifying the power relation as the general focus [...] of philosophical discourse.' [Power 53] According to Schacht, Nietzsche developed the will to power as a means to avoid agency while explaining "the tendency to organization" in the natural world as "some characteristic rooted in the specific



By equating life with the will to power, Nietzsche regarded all forms of moral and religious restraints as provisional blockages of the grand universal 'drive' which encompasses everything from bacteria to bacculaureates:

To talk of right and wrong *as such* is senseless; *in themselves*, injury, violation, exploitation, and destruction can of course be nothing 'wrong', in so far as life operates *essentially*-- that is, in terms of its basic functions-- through injury, violation, exploitation, and destruction, and cannot be conceived in any other way. One is forced to admit something even more disturbing: that, from the highest biological point of view, legal conditions may be nothing more than *exceptional states of emergency*, partial restrictions which the will to life in its quest for power provisionally imposes on itself in order to serve its overall goal: the creation of *larger units of power*.<sup>76</sup>

Subsequently, he strongly disagreed with Darwin's 'erroneous' presupposition concerning the primary instinct of biological life: "Physiologists should think again before postulating the drive to self-preservation as the cardinal drive in an organic being. A living thing desires above all to *vent* its strength-- life as such is will to power--: self-preservation is only one of the indirect and most frequent *consequences* of it."<sup>77</sup>

According to Nietzsche, his grand schema of power had an explanatory scope that was second to none, and could even explain natural life on the cellular level: "Is it virtuous when a cell transforms itself into a function of a stronger cell? It has no alternative. And is

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nature of force itself." [212] Clark gives three reasons for rejecting the view that Nietzsche personally subscribed to the belief that, "reality consists of fields of force or dynamic quanta, each of which is essentially a drive to expand and thus to increase its power relative to all other quanta." First, most support is derived from the nebulous, unpublished notebooks; second, this view contradicts Nietzsche's questioning the "causality of the will" and would entail a cosmic anthropomorphism which he utterly abhors; [Clark 857] third, the 'will to power' was originally formulated as "one human drive among others". [858] However, the unpublished materials are not so easy to discount as 'rejects', given the abrupt termination of his writing career. Though Nietzsche obviously disdained the Schopenhauerian and Christian myth of the will as a centre for causality, he clearly endorsed a recalibrated use of the term-- Schacht suggests an inference of 'drive' or 'dispositional orientation'. [221] Furthermore, Nietzsche's thought continued to develop over time, and the term's original parameters were radically expanded. Despite its metaphysical 'baggage', the word 'will' arguably served Nietzsche's purposes for inspiring human effort to greatness while simultaneously undermining metaphysical objections to the fundamentally "egoistical" nature of all living forces [Houlgate *Hegel* 67] through use of a pivotal and familiar component of the contemporary zeitgeist. See Safranski 108. Salomé believed that, "Nietzsche's theory of the will points to a merging of his former metaphysical views with a scientific determinism." [106]

<sup>76</sup> GM 56.

<sup>77</sup> BG 44. See also Z 138: "[L]ife sacrifices itself-- for the sake of power!" As Kaufmann deftly exclaims, Nietzsche was "not a Darwinist, but only aroused from his dogmatic slumbers by Darwin". [*Nietzsche* xiii]

it evil when the stronger cell assimilates the weaker? It also has no alternative; it follows necessity, for it strives for superabundant substitutes and wants to regenerate itself."<sup>78</sup> Because the will to power is "[t]he most universal and basic instinct in all doing and willing", Nietzsche explained that it has been previously unnoticed by theorists, "because *in praxi* we always follow its commandments, because we *are* this commandment."<sup>79</sup>

### C. Time: Eternal Recurrence:

Although he intended to write a book on eternal recurrence, Nietzsche never developed a completed formulation of this concept.<sup>80</sup> One notebook entry illuminates how the tenet flowed naturally from his belief in a universe devoid of telos:

If the world had a goal, it must have been reached. If there were for it some unintended final state, this also must have been reached. If it were in any way capable of a pausing and becoming fixed, of 'being', if in the whole course of its becoming it possessed even for a moment this capability of 'being', then all becoming would long since have come to an end, along with all thinking, all spirit'. The fact of 'spirit' as a form of becoming proves that the world has no goal, no final state, and is incapable of being.<sup>81</sup>

The theory of eternal recurrence was introduced as part of the essential 'psychosophysical' makeup of the 'preparatory' human being who provides the foundation for the *Übermensch*: "[T]here is no longer any reason in what happens, no love in what will happen to you; no resting place is open any longer to your heart, where it only needs to find and no longer to seek; you resist any ultimate peace; you will the eternal recurrence of war and peace [...]"<sup>82</sup> In *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, existence is portrayed as an indestructible,

<sup>78</sup> GS 175-176. Even mitosis could be explained by his grand theory: "A protoplasm divides in two when its power is no longer adequate to control what it has appropriated: procreation is the consequence of an impotency." [WP 345 (1885-1886)] See also WP 403 [1882].

<sup>79</sup> WP 356 [1887-1888].

<sup>80</sup> For a planned outline, see WP 544 [1883-1888].

<sup>81</sup> WP 546 [1885]. Later, he described his doctrine as 'reconciling' "[t]he two most extreme modes of thought-- the mechanistic and the Platonic". [WP 546 (1887-1888)]

<sup>82</sup> GS 230. This later becomes a curse uttered by a demon! [GS 273] Kaufmann observes that the idea is not original to Nietzsche. Probable sources include the Pythagorean notion that terrestrial events recur when celestial configurations are repeated, [UM 70] Empedocles, [See Barnes 166], Schopenhauer, the myth of Dionysus, the natural science of Julius Robert Mayer, [Safranski 223-225] and poet Heinrich Heine: "Now, however long a time may pass, according to the eternal laws governing the combinations of the eternal play of repetition, all configurations that have previously existed on this earth must yet meet, attract, repulse, kiss, and corrupt each other again [...]" [cited in GS 16]

perpetually inverted 'hourglass':

But the complex of causes in which I am entangled will recur-- it will create me again! I myself am part of these causes of the eternal recurrence. 'I shall return with this sun, with this earth, with this eagle, with this serpent-- *not* to a new life or a better life or a similar life: 'I shall return eternally to this identical and self-same life, in the greatest things and the smallest, to teach once more the eternal recurrence of all things, 'to speak once more the teaching of the great noontide of earth and man, to tell of the Superman once more.'<sup>83</sup>

It is a dizzying piece of logic to conceive of someone who is 'the first' to proclaim the infinite repetition of existence! For similar reasons, Maudemarie Clark has argued that eternal recurrence should be considered as a hermeneutical ideal or 'philosophical test case' for evaluating the vitality of new values, as opposed to a cosmological statement.<sup>84</sup> However, Nietzsche's erstwhile companion and commentator, Lou Salomé maintains: "[I]n fact, Nietzsche's logic, ethics, and aesthetics must be regarded as building blocks for his teaching of the eternal recurrence."<sup>85</sup> It is important to situate the doctrine of eternal recurrence within Nietzsche's overabundant enthusiasm to embrace unconditionally all of life in its entirety: "To me [...] everything seems far too valuable to be so fleeting: I seek an eternity for everything: ought one to pour the most precious salves and wines into the sea? --My consolation is that everything that has been is eternal: the sea will cast it up again."<sup>86</sup> The themes of 'anti-telos' and unconditional embrace were united in the figure of "the suprahistorical man, who sees no salvation in the process and for whom, rather, the world is complete and reaches its finality at each and every moment."<sup>87</sup>

Because all events are inextricably interconnected, Nietzsche argued that a person cannot nullify any 'negative' without negating all of existence. Hence, Zarathustra proclaimed, "All things are chained and entwined together, all things are in love; if ever

<sup>83</sup> Z 237-238.

<sup>84</sup> Clark 858-859. See also Houlgate *Hegel* 85, Strong 258, and Nehamas 142-143. Tanner contends that Nietzsche's musings on the topic are too obtuse to form a comprehensive cosmological theory, [*Nietzsche* 53] while Kaufmann argues that it is "less an idea than an experience", a state of 'arrival' wherein man "gives meaning to his own life by achieving perfection and exulting in the moment." [*Nietzsche* 323, 324]

<sup>85</sup> Salomé 129.

<sup>86</sup> WP 548 [1887-1888]. There seems to be an intriguing parallel between the strong man's embrace of eternal recurrence and the 'weakness' represented by an allusion in Feuerbach's *The Essence of Christianity*, wherein Parny relates the response of a dying Negro slave who refused 'immortality' by baptism: "Je ne veux point d'une autre vie, car peut-être y serais-je encore votre esclave." [179]

you wanted one moment twice, if ever you said, 'You please me, happiness, instant, moment!' then you wanted *everything* to return!"<sup>88</sup> While 'lower' men shun suffering and loss, the 'higher-minded' comprehend that, "[a]ll joy wants the eternity of all things."<sup>89</sup>

Contrary to the 'life-deprecating' tenets of Christianity or Stoicism, Nietzsche declared,

My formula for greatness in a human being is *amor fati*: that one wants nothing to be other than it is, not in the future, not in the past, not in all eternity. Not merely to endure that which happens of necessity, still less to dissemble it-- all idealism is untruthfulness in the face of necessity-- but to *love* it..."<sup>90</sup>

In theory, the doctrine thus allowed Nietzsche to savour heartily the kaleidoscope of variations in existence without resorting to a stultifying teleology which necessarily negated variables deemed 'unnecessary' or 'undesirable.' Hence, he compared the joyous 'strains' of existence to a 'music box' that "repeats eternally its tune which may never be called a melody."<sup>91</sup>

## II. The Anthropological Tier:

In a letter written on October 25, 1874, Nietzsche expressed his desire to comprehend "the whole highly complex system of antagonisms that make up the 'modern world'".<sup>92</sup> He once explained his major thrust as follows: "My task is the dehumanization of nature and then the naturalization of humanity once it has attained the pure concept of 'nature' [...]"<sup>93</sup> The pathos behind this gargantuan yet paradoxical undertaking is reminiscent of Goethe:

I gather heart to risk the world's encounter,  
To bear my human fate as fate's surmounter [...]"<sup>94</sup>

Having outlined Nietzsche's understanding of the universe in broad strokes, it is necessary to focus more specifically upon how humankind responds to its decidedly decentred

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<sup>87</sup> UM 66.

<sup>88</sup> Z 332.

<sup>89</sup> Z 332.

<sup>90</sup> EH 37-38.

<sup>91</sup> GS 168. This unconditional embrace of everything ironically exposes Nietzsche to his own criticism of David Strauss's doctrine of Providence: if all events "contain a revelation of eternal goodness itself", Nietzsche requires "a complete cosmodicy", not merely a theodicy. [UM 32]

<sup>92</sup> Safranski 156.

<sup>93</sup> Safranski 227.



position in the cosmos.

## A. Epistemology as Power:

### 1. Reality Under Construction:

One of Nietzsche's primary principles is the notion that 'notion' itself is not based upon external 'truth' but rather stems from the psychological needs and desires of the truth-sayer.<sup>95</sup> Because humankind inhabits a world of hostile indifference, devoid of a universal Caretaker, cultures and civilizations strive for mastery by remaking the world in their own imagery:

That which we now call the world is the result of a number of errors and fantasies, which came about gradually in the overall development of organic beings, fusing with one another, and now handed down to us as a collected treasure of our entire past-- a treasure: for the *value* of our humanity rests upon it.<sup>96</sup>

Nietzsche contended that, despite their variety and contradictions with one another, the diversity of systems of thought, metaphysics, and morality are united in their self-presumed 'goodness': "Socrates and Plato are right: whatever man does, he always acts for the good; that is, in a way that seems to him good (useful) according to the degree of his intellect, the prevailing measure of his rationality."<sup>97</sup> Rather than sinking into a despairing agnosticism over epistemological relativism,<sup>98</sup> by classifying the will to truth as

<sup>94</sup> Goethe I 46.

<sup>95</sup> BG 39, Z 136, WP 267 [1883-1888].

<sup>96</sup> HA 24.

<sup>97</sup> HA 71.

<sup>98</sup> Carr carefully distinguishes Nietzsche's perspectivism: "It is not to be understood as a denial of meaning, of knowledge *per se*, only as a denial that there is any one meaning undergirding the world as it is in and of itself." His view is not as individualist as first appears, since the myriad interpretations are fostered "in terms of the drives and needs he postulated as common to all human beings". [Carr 90] Nehamas adds an unNietzschean egalitarian and/ or individualist spin on the matter: "Perspectivism does not result in the relativism that holds that any view is as good as another; it holds that one's own views are the best for oneself without implying that they need be good for anyone else." [72] Although Nietzsche believed it is wrong to impose universal mores regardless of class and other qualitative divisions among individuals, he unapologetically contended that his views are best for the human race, hence, the tremendous vitriol he exuded towards opposing view points such as utilitarianism, nationalism, and liberalism. Hence, I favour Richardson's observation that, "Nietzsche replaces the bivalent notion of truth with a graded hierarchy of perspectives [...]" [290]

will to power,<sup>99</sup> Nietzsche possessed a universal standard by which to measure all human 'truths': a precept was good-- i.e., 'natural' and therefore 'healthy'-- to the extent that it expressed and/ or augmented one's degree of power, primarily by liberating man's instincts,<sup>100</sup> and embraced life in the material world:

Every philosophy that ranks peace above war, every ethic with a negative definition of happiness, every metaphysics and physics that knows some *finale*, some final state of some sort, every predominantly aesthetic or religious craving for some Apart, Beyond, Outside, Above, permits the question whether it was not sickness that inspired the philosopher. The unconscious disguise of physiological needs under the cloaks of the objective, ideal, purely spiritual goes to frightening lengths [...]<sup>101</sup>

In *The Gay Science*, Nietzsche observed that humankind lives its entire life on a 'must-know' basis: "Gradually, man has become a fantastic animal that has to fulfill one more condition of existence than any other animal: man *has to* believe, to know, from time to time *why* he exists: his race cannot flourish without a periodic trust in life-- without faith in *reason in life*."<sup>102</sup> Like the ancient Greeks, Nietzsche cherished an attitude of reverent wonder towards the natural world:

But to stand in the midst of this *rerum Concordia discors* and of this whole marvellous uncertainty and rich ambiguity of existence *without questioning*, without trembling with the craving and the rapture of such questioning, without at least hating the person who questions, perhaps even finding him faintly amusing-- that is what I feel to be *contemptible*, and this is the feeling for which I look first

<sup>99</sup> Nietzsche cautiously approved of will to truth "[o]nly insofar as the truthful man possesses the unconditional will to justice [...] whereas in the eyes of less clear-sighted men a whole host of the most various drives-- curiosity, flight from boredom, envy, vanity, the desire for amusement, for example-- can be involved in the striving for truth". [UM 88-89] As Richardson thoroughly points out, Nietzsche's life work as a philosopher reflects his personal endorsement of the will to truth. [220-231]

<sup>100</sup> Clark correctly asserts that Nietzsche did not reject morality for 'restricting the satisfaction of natural impulses': "He finds what is natural and 'inestimable' in any morality in the hatred it teaches of simply following one's impulses, of any 'all-too-great freedom': it teaches 'obedience over a long period of time and in a single direction'." [853] However, I would qualify her statement by contending that Nietzsche rejects those moralities which suppress rather than strengthen what he regards as 'essential', life-enhancing instincts. Despite the flirtatious bravado exhibited in an 1882 letter to his darling Lou-- "Mind? What is 'mind' to me? What does knowledge matter? I treasure nothing except *impulse* [...]"-- [Salomé 91] he neither envisioned nor desired an ethical 'free-for-all'-- merely a 'free-for-some'.

<sup>101</sup> GS 34. See also HA 213. For genuine "truth" as "life-enhancing", see UM 71. In addition to Christianity, Buddhism, and other 'life-defeating' tenets, Nietzsche identified an 'oversaturation of history' as 'disrupting the instincts of a people' through a paralysis-inducing self-consciousness. [UM 83] For the "unfree man" as "a disgrace to nature" and 'unnatural', see UM 252: "If it should become aware of itself, unnature can only long for nothingness [...]"

<sup>102</sup> GS 75.

in everybody.<sup>103</sup>

Hence, he advised humanity to renounce its 'childish ways' and shed any cognitive 'exoskeletons' which formerly protected life but now constrict it:

But perhaps this error [repressing the instincts] was as necessary for you then, when you were still a different person-- you are always a different person as are all your present 'truths', being a skin, as it were, that concealed and covered a great deal that you were not yet permitted to see. What killed that opinion for you was your new life and not your reason: *you no longer need it*, and now it collapses and unreason crawls out of it into the light like a worm.<sup>104</sup>

The problem of epistemology simply is the over-vaunted, untenable position of 'truth' itself, which plagued scientists and salvationists alike: "the same overestimation of the truth (more accurately: the same belief that the truth is *above* evaluation and criticism)."<sup>105</sup> Subsequently, Nietzsche unleashed his 'battle cry': "[T]he value of truth must for once, by way of experiment, be *called into question*."<sup>106</sup> It must be emphasized that Nietzsche was not a proponent of nihilistic relativism, but merely opposed those traditional formulations of truth which he deemed as 'diseased' or 'life-inhibiting', preferring openness to a multiplicity of perspectives. Hence, he could still exclaim with near-evangelical fervour: "Truth has had to be fought for every step of the way, almost everything dear to our hearts, on which our love and our trust in life depend, has had to be sacrificed to it. Greatness of soul is needed for it: the service of truth is the hardest service."<sup>107</sup>

## 2. Dis-Ontologizing Being:

Because 'truth' is ineluctably conditioned by the conscious and unconscious drives of the truth-seeker, Nietzsche contended that it was impossible to distinguish appearances versus 'things-in-themselves', "for we do not 'know' nearly enough to be entitled to any such distinction."<sup>108</sup> Even the 'clear sight' of Zarathustra reflects the collapse of ontology

<sup>103</sup> GS 76-77.

<sup>104</sup> GS 246.

<sup>105</sup> GM 128.

<sup>106</sup> GM 128. Nietzsche even suggested that the 'will to truth' "might be a concealed will to death". [GS 282]

<sup>107</sup> TI 179.

<sup>108</sup> GS 300. See also HA 13 and UM 27: "[I]t is precisely reason that ought to tell him [Strauss] how little of

into human subjectivity when he pontificated: "And whatever may yet come to me as fate and experience-- a wandering and a mountain-climbing will be in it: in the final analysis one experiences only oneself."<sup>109</sup> For this reason, Nietzsche once sketched in his notebook that a self-critical stance was illusory:

The intellect cannot criticize itself, simply because it cannot be compared with other species of intellect and because its capacity to know would be revealed only in the presence of 'true reality', i.e., because in order to criticize the intellect we should have to be a higher being with 'absolute knowledge'. This presupposes that, distinct from every perspective kind of outlook or sensual-spiritual appropriation, something exists, an 'in-itself'. --But the psychological derivation of the belief in things forbids us to speak of 'things-in-themselves.'"<sup>110</sup>

Without an Archimedean comprehension of 'being', there can be no absolute certainty of human knowing.<sup>111</sup> The appeal to 'fact' is a cultural fable because, "All meaning is will to power (all relative meaning resolves itself into it)."<sup>112</sup> Facticity merely entails what previous generations have found useful to their specific contexts and agendas.<sup>113</sup>

For Nietzsche, existence consists of a never-ending swirl of force and counter-force, an orgiastic, eternally dynamic-- if restless-- endlessness of 'becomings', which humankind has purposefully ossified into 'beings' for the purposes of human stability.<sup>114</sup> 'Being', therefore, lacks ontological status: objects do not exist in and of themselves-- value-laden 'editors' have merely dissected the reel-to-reel 'film' of becoming into motionless 'freeze-frames' of being: "In the world of becoming, 'reality' is always only a simplification for practical ends, or a deception through the coarseness of

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the in-itself of things can be determined by reason."

<sup>109</sup> Z 173.

<sup>110</sup> WP 263 [1886-1887].

<sup>111</sup> WP 269 [1885-1886]: "One would have to know what *being* is, in order to decide whether this or that is real (e.g., 'the facts of consciousness'); in the same way, what *certainty* is, what *knowledge* is, and the like. -- But since we do not know this, a critique of the faculty of knowledge is senseless: how should a tool be able to criticize itself when it can use only itself for a critique? It cannot even define itself!"

<sup>112</sup> WP 323 [1885-1886]. Cf. Feuerbach: "A fact [...] is a conception about the truth of which there is no doubt, because it is no object of theory, but of feeling, which desires that what it wishes, what it believes, should be true." [205]

<sup>113</sup> GS 300.

<sup>114</sup> Nietzsche used the example of lightning to demonstrate how humans reified the transient 'becoming' into a solidified 'being' by imposing the narrative of intentionality [will] upon it: "If I say 'lightning flashes', I have posited the flash once as an activity and a second time as a subject, and thus added to the event a 'being' that is not one with the event but is rather fixed, *is*, and does not 'become'-- To regard an event as an 'effecting', and this as being, that is the double error, or interpretation, of which we are guilty." [WP 288]



organs, or a variation in the tempo of becoming.”<sup>115</sup> Nietzsche assiduously endeavoured to prevent his emphasis on ‘becomings’ from being assimilated within traditional teleological categories:

Becoming must be explained without recourse to final intentions; becoming must appear justified at every moment (or incapable of being evaluated; which amounts to the same thing); the present must absolutely not be justified by reference to a future, nor the past by reference to the present [...]. More strictly, one must admit nothing that has being-- because then becoming would lose its value and actually appear meaningless and superfluous.<sup>116</sup>

In summary, a fundamental ambivalence characterizes Nietzsche’s thought with regards to the notion of truth. While he adamantly sought to deny an ontology of being, which presupposes a greater, metaphysical Being or higher reality to which man and nature must submit, he approved of truth claims insofar as they represent manifestations of humankind’s will to power: “To impose upon becoming the character of being-- that is the supreme will to power.”<sup>117</sup> His response to fossilized ontologies of being was to advocate journeys without arrivals and joyfully acknowledge the endless flux of cosmic synergy without nailing ‘becomings’ and potentialities onto the ‘crosses’ of brute facts and ideologies: “That *everything recurs* is the closest *approximation of a world of becoming to a world of being*-- high point of meditation.”<sup>118</sup>

### 3. Philosophical Eugenics:

#### a. Countering Nihilism:

“What are man’s truths ultimately?” Nietzsche once thundered. “Merely his *irrefutable errors*.”<sup>119</sup> While weaker individuals panic at the notion of a semantic abyss

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(1885-1886)]

<sup>115</sup> WP 312 [1887].

<sup>116</sup> WP 377 [1887-1888]. See also WP 546 [1885] where teleology implied an exhaustion of becoming, an end to “all thinking, all ‘spirit’”. Thus, the purpose of Hellenistic tragedy was not a purgative for negative passions (Aristotle) but a transcendence of such passions-- “*to realize in oneself the eternal joy of becoming-- that joy which also encompasses joy in destruction...*” [TI 121]

<sup>117</sup> WP 330 [1883-1885].

<sup>118</sup> WP 330 [1883-1885].

<sup>119</sup> GS 219. Such ‘errors’ are necessary for supporting human prosperity, forming a ‘breathable’ planetary ‘atmosphere’ “dominated not by knowledge but by instinct and powerful illusions.” [UM 97] Nietzsche



separating the 'knower' from the objective world, Nietzsche rejoiced: "There is no 'reality' for us-- not for you either, my sober friends."<sup>120</sup> This 'ontological freedom' allows humanity to modify the world at will by altering one's interpretative lenses: "[I]t is enough to create new names and estimations and probabilities in order to create in the long run new 'things'."<sup>121</sup> Although many human 'truths' are fallacious, they are still useful for human mastery of the environment:

The falseness of a judgment is to us not necessarily an objection to a judgment: it is here that our new language perhaps sounds strangest. The question is to what extent is it life-advancing, life-preserving, species preserving, perhaps even species-breeding; and our fundamental tendency is to assert that the falsest judgments (to which synthetic judgments *a priori* belong) are the most indispensable to us [...]<sup>122</sup>

Such 'necessary lies' include the beliefs "that there are enduring things; that there are equal things; that there are things, substances, bodies; that a thing is what it appears to be; that our will is free; that what is good for me is also good in itself."<sup>123</sup>

For Nietzsche, the history of ideas, like the history of the universe, is a saga of strife and insurrection:

Woe to him who seeks to darken it [a 'cherished idea']; unless it itself should one day become suspicious to us:-- then, unwearying king-makers in the history of the spirit that we are, we hurl it from the throne, and immediately raise its opponents in its place.<sup>124</sup>

One response to the fallaciousness of 'truth' and nature's ongoing dissolution of existing power configurations is nihilism.<sup>125</sup> Nietzsche once identified three 'psychological states'

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seems to be drawing strongly upon Feuerbach, who contended that every fact "expresses a want, and is for that reason an impassable limit of the mind." [205]

<sup>120</sup> GS 121.

<sup>121</sup> GS 122.

<sup>122</sup> BG 35. Though one's capacity for new ideas was limited by one's capacity for power: "One hears only those questions for which one is able to find answers." [GS 206] This is how Nietzsche explained the poor reception of his own writings. [EH 40]

<sup>123</sup> GS 169. He singled out the fallacy of free will as intrinsic to many of humanity's most lasting accomplishments: "It is a step in the development of the feeling of power itself to have caused one's own exalted states (one's perfection)-- consequently, one immediately concludes, to have *willed* them--" [WP 162-163 (1888)]

<sup>124</sup> NR 31. See also HA 154. Furthermore, he contended that past taboos typically become current conventions. [GS 170-171]

<sup>125</sup> Nietzsche ingeniously attributed nihilism to the will to truth, which ironically shreds the tissue of lies upon which it is based. Hence, "Christian piety demands we give up Christianity; our commitment to the

which give rise to nihilism: the awareness that 'becoming' has no goals; the awareness that there are no "grand unities" or cosmic schemes in which man participates; and a disbelief in the existence of truth.<sup>126</sup> Rather than regarding nihilism as a theoretical irruption, he viewed it as a natural and necessary outcome of man's 'fatal' will to get to the bottom of things, the unmasking of venerated falsehoods which enable humankind to subsist in an artificially benevolent universe which caters to human whims: "The faith in the categories of reason is the cause of nihilism. We have measured the value of the world according to categories *that refer to a purely fictitious world.*"<sup>127</sup> For Nietzsche, the philosophical 'therapy' for humankind's epistemological pathology is clear: in order to liberate the Dionysian appreciation of 'becoming', the world of 'being' would have to be sublated: "*Overcoming of philosophers* through the destruction of the world of being: intermediary period of nihilism: before there is yet present the strength to reverse values and to deify becoming and the apparent world as the only world, and to call them good."<sup>128</sup> Thus, nihilism was endorsed by Nietzsche only as a means of demolition to clear the ground for new philosophical constructions, but never as an end in itself.<sup>129</sup>

#### b. The Philosopher's Role:

The intricate organicism of Nietzsche's thought parallels the intrinsic interconnectedness of every element in the natural universe. The role of philosophy is, consequently, to facilitate an unconditional acceptance and exuberance for all aspects of nature. In his notebooks, he once wrote, "In the actual world, in which everything is bound to and conditioned by everything else, to condemn and think away anything means to condemn and think away everything. The expression 'that should not be', 'that should not

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truth compels us to admit that our concept of God is a lie." [Carr 95] Richardson cogently indicates how the dissolution of strength aligns with Nietzsche's view of a universe in flux: "As the master's rule brought about his degeneration [through decadence], so there's a logic to the dominance of the slave morality, which leads to its own dissolution [into nihilism]." [65]

<sup>126</sup> WP 13 [1887-88].

<sup>127</sup> WP 13 [1887-88]. Habermas writes, "Like all who leap out of the dialectic of enlightenment, Nietzsche undertakes a conspicuous levelling." [87]

<sup>128</sup> WP 319 [1887, 88].

<sup>129</sup> Hollingdale claims that Nietzsche's ultimate aim was "the transcendence of modern nihilism". [*Nietzsche* 115]

have been', is farcical--"<sup>130</sup> However, Nietzsche's concept of a universe 'closed off' from any transcendent interference invoked an ardent conservatism. Because there is no infusion of new energy from 'beyond', no creation *ex nihilo*, all of nature's resources are limited; therefore, new 'becomings' are only possible given the demise and reconstitution of older forms. Such hermeneutical recycling is pivotal to the role of philosopher as Nietzsche conceived it. Like a Nordic god standing warily victorious over his prehistoric 'kill', he has to ensure that every metaphysical 'rib' and drop of semantic 'blood' is judiciously employed to fashion new structures from the corpses of the vanquished 'titans'. Subsequently, a form of 'epistemological cannibalism' becomes the hallmark of the genealogical approach to history:

[A]nything which exists, once it has somehow come into being, can be reinterpreted in the service of new intentions, repossessed, repeatedly modified to a new use by a power superior to it; that everything which happens in the organic world is part of a process of *overpowering*, *mastering*, and that, in turn, all overpowering and mastering is a reinterpretation, a manipulation, in the course of which the previous 'meaning' and 'aim' must necessarily be obscured or completely effaced.<sup>131</sup>

According to Nietzsche's 'Third Law of Spiritual Thermodynamics', nothing can disappear-- it can merely be re-circulated.<sup>132</sup> Hence, the great philosophical mission is to challenge the 'powers that be' in order to prepare the way for the 'powers that become'.<sup>133</sup>

It is noteworthy that Nietzsche did not personally promulgate a specific societal blueprint or political model for government.<sup>134</sup> Such undertakings may have been

<sup>130</sup> WP 316 [1888].

<sup>131</sup> GM 57-58.

<sup>132</sup> WP 323 (1883-1886): "There is no struggle for existence between ideas and perceptions, but a struggle for dominion: the idea that is overcome is not annihilated, only driven back or subordinated. There is no annihilation in the sphere of spirit--"

<sup>133</sup> Concerning the concepts of 'God', 'progress', 'eternity', and 'truth', Zarathustra proclaimed, "All that is intransitory-- that is but an image! And the poets lie too much. But the best images and parables should speak of time and becoming: they should be a eulogy and a justification of all transitoriness." [Z 111]

<sup>134</sup> In this qualified sense, Kaufmann is correct in calling attention to Nietzsche's 'antipolitical' nature regarding his relentless opposition of "the idolatry of the state", political liberalism, and sectarianism on any level. [Nietzsche 412] Golomb and Wistrich state that Nietzsche later wanted his publisher to remove the contentious statement in *Ecce Homo* which "supposedly declared himself to be a non-political thinker." [11] Perhaps Nietzsche's political 'silence' is a Zarathustrian move, reminiscent of Plotinus' view of Heraclitus: "[H]e leaves us to conjecture and omits to make his argument clear to us, no doubt because we should inquire for ourselves as he himself inquired and found." [Barnes 117] Houlgate argues that Nietzsche's rejection of ontology means he can only provide "a metaphorical description of reality whose pictorial content is more

considered too banal or ineffectual for implementing his epistemological revolution-- an overturning of conventional formulations of truth in order to expand both the imaginal frontiers of the species and surpass the bounds of what it means to be human.<sup>135</sup> Therefore, to establish another creed or political system would merely be to fall into the trap of petrifying 'becomings' into 'beings' beneath the withering Medusan glare of 'objective truth'. What he sought, rather, was to alter the definitions and existential parameters of what it means to be human. Hence, in an essay on philosophical education, Nietzsche contended that the true educator's role is neither to nurture a pupil's greatest strength to the neglect of all other faculties, nor to strengthen all of one's forces and coral them into a harmonious order, but to identify "the central force" in each pupil and "prevent its acting destructively on the other forces: his educational task would, it seemed to me, be to mould the whole man into a living solar and planetary system and to understand its higher laws of motions."<sup>136</sup>

Nietzsche's understanding of humankind was characterized by a significant degree of ambivalence. As a species which is intractably embedded in the cosmic surge towards greater units of power, humankind involuntarily participates in the great '*telos*' of nature. Like a vibrant tree, humankind must grow in all directions at once, pressing downwards

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appropriate to the chaotic nature of life than the description yielded by metaphysics." [Hegel 47] As such, the reader is "invited" to supply the experiential-based content for Nietzsche's metaphorical vision. [Hegel 55] Given humankind's historical track-record, I don't believe Nietzsche possessed such overwhelming confidence to justify such generous hermeneutical liberties with his work, particularly given his fear of being misunderstood. [EH 96, 104] See Ansell-Pearson for a fascinating overview of how Nietzsche was appropriated by the "purely power-political interests" or *Machtpolitik* which he rigorously opposed. [29-32]<sup>135</sup> See Golomb and Wistrich's useful if overstated distinction between *Macht* ["spiritual power"] and *Kraft* ["brute political force"] [8], and Golomb "De-Nazify 20-24. Golomb writes: "The distinction between 'force' and 'power' is based on the assumption that that *power is a sublimated force*." ["De-Nazify" 21] Sadly, the distinction seems obscured by a 'liberal' dichotomization between public and private, the reification of power as something possessable which may be harnessed and directed at will-- a Zeusian 'thunderbolt' as opposed to a 'static electrical' shock which is generated inadvertently [or not!] between two bodies shuffling across a carpet on a mid-winter's day in the Canadian prairies-- and an atomistic definition of the individual as isolated entity who defines rather than is defined by the complicated nexus of relationships which constitute her broader community or communities. In reality, the divisions are more blurred, and I seriously doubt whether power can be hermeneutically sealed. For example, John F. Kennedy's vision of lunar colonization was simultaneously an inspired deployment of 'spiritual power' as well as a political coup over the Soviet Union. Similarly, the lines are less clear in Nietzsche's writings when the artist exerts force when crafting his medium. For a more synonymous use of 'force' and 'power', see WP 229-300 [1887].

<sup>136</sup> UM 131.



into the subterranean murk while clutching at the stratosphere of ethereal excellence.<sup>137</sup> Happily, the tree can be pruned. Hence, Zarathustra declared, "Our way is upward, from the species across to the superspecies."<sup>138</sup> The notion of 'human becomings' energized Nietzsche and preserved him from nihilistic despair, particularly when viewing his contemporaries:

So far they [Germans] are nothing: that means, they are all sorts of things. They will become something: that means, they will stop some day being all sorts of things. The latter is at bottom a mere wish, scarcely a hope; fortunately, a wish on which one can live, a matter of will, of work, of discipline, of breeding, as well as a matter of annoyance, of desire, of missing something, of discomfort, even of bitterness [...]<sup>139</sup>

Nietzsche's timely appearance boded well for the development of the species, which had fallen prey to certain life-enervating obstructions: "I take it for a piece of good fortune of the first rank to have lived at the right time, and to have lived precisely among Germans, so as to be *ripe* for this work [...]"<sup>140</sup> Philosophy's greatest service to humankind lies in determining which part of nature is unalterable and then "*improving that part of it recognized as alterable* with the most ruthless courage."<sup>141</sup> The German philosopher valiantly strove to hold back the 'sea' of natural determinism via a program of cultural 'dam-building': "The best we can do is to confront our inherited and hereditary nature with our knowledge, and through a new, stern discipline combat our inborn heritage and implant in ourselves a new habit, a new instinct, a second nature, so that our first nature withers away."<sup>142</sup> By altering the spiritual 'genome' of the human race, the role of the philosopher is extended to that of 'breeder':

The philosopher as *we* understand him, we free spirits-- as the man of the most comprehensive responsibility who has the conscience for the collective evolution of mankind: this philosopher will make use of the religions for his work of education and breeding, just as he will make use of existing political and

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<sup>137</sup> GS 331-332.

<sup>138</sup> Z 100.

<sup>139</sup> WP 68 [1885].

<sup>140</sup> EH 31.

<sup>141</sup> UM 208.

<sup>142</sup> UM 76. Golomb correctly observes, "Nietzsche rejects crude naturalism and does not believe that the innateness of one's nature, be it even an individualistic essence, completely determines one's self." [Golomb "Nietzsche" 244] Otherwise, Nietzsche's entire project would be nonsensical. I'm not so sure Nietzsche's optimism for change didn't wane towards the end of his life, rendering his philosophical vision more tragic than inane.



economic conditions.<sup>143</sup>

This united the philosopher with the singular focus of human civilization: "*to promote the production of the philosopher, the artist and the saint within us and without us and thereby to work at the perfecting of nature.*"<sup>144</sup>

## B. Comprehending the Universal: The Fallacy of Free Will:

After examining the implications of Nietzsche's thought for epistemology, ontology, and the task of philosophy, it is necessary to elucidate further his views on humankind. Nietzsche's comprehension remains consistent with his universal rubric of nature as the ceaseless conflict of "all against all".<sup>145</sup> As Safranski notes, man is not regarded as an "individuum" but a "dividuum".<sup>146</sup> Subsequently, he represents a conglomeration of drives and instincts waging perpetual warfare for mastery of the self, wherein a "sovereign instinct" emerges which temporarily subordinates the weaker instincts as 'tools'.<sup>147</sup> Even self-knowledge becomes a dubious prospect at best.<sup>148</sup> Nietzsche did not, however, allow individuals to excuse their self-anarchy, but rather urged his reader to "organize the chaos within him by thinking back to his real needs."<sup>149</sup> Human 'health'-- a significant theme in light of Nietzsche's recurring bouts with illness-- is

<sup>143</sup> BG 86.

<sup>144</sup> UM 160. Nietzsche's enthusiasm towards the saint as the paradigm for personal transformation from the base to the glorious [UM 161] waned in later years. See Kaufmann *Nietzsche* 280.

<sup>145</sup> UM 30.

<sup>146</sup> Safranski 184. The meaning is two-fold: a person is divided by competing instincts; a person experiences himself via reflection as a "living self-counterpart". [302]

<sup>147</sup> WP 203 [1883-1888], BG 37. Such passages do not quite entail "the nuclear fission of the individual" *per se*, as pithily phrased by Safranski, [26] but do reflect the dissolution of the individual as postulated by traditional metaphysical and ethical systems. Oddly, the divided-self theme finds a parallel in certain Christian formulations, and self as struggle was a familiar motif in Paul, Augustine, and Luther [e.g., "Selections" 31] I concur with Gemes' warning against a postmodernist championing of Nietzsche's 'decentred self' in light of his opposition to unrestrained nihilism: "Nietzsche typically stresses the importance of finding a unitary voice, of finding a means to retell history as a pathway to one's own constructed self." [338] Tanner contends that Nietzsche is "the first person to insist that there is no such thing as a substantial self, which can view the world with dispassion, uncontaminated by its environment." [63] Unlike certain postmodern deconstructive projects, Nietzsche is ultimately not interested in epistemological *Schadenfreude*, but in reconstruction and revaluation. See Detwiler 86.

<sup>148</sup> UM 129: "How can man know himself? He is a thing dark and veiled; and if the hare has seven skins, man can slough off seventy times seven and still not be able to say: 'this is really you, this is no longer shell.'" In *Daybreak*, he claimed: "If we would wish and dare to construct an architecture corresponding to the nature of our soul we would have to take the labyrinth as a model." [cited in Salomé 22]

<sup>149</sup> UM 123.

predicated upon one of the "dominating passions" governing the "multiplicity of 'souls in one breast'".<sup>150</sup> Nietzsche contended that such drives "have all at some time or other practiced philosophy-- and [...] each one of them would be only too glad to present *itself* as the ultimate goal of existence and as the legitimate *master* of all the other drives."<sup>151</sup>

Thought itself is an artifice dictated by and dictated over the instincts:

'Thinking', as epistemologists conceive it, simply does not occur: it is a quite arbitrary fiction, arrived at by selecting one element from the process and eliminating all the rest, an artificial arrangement for the purpose of intelligibility-- The 'spirit' something that thinks: where possible even 'absolute, pure spirit'-- this conception is a second derivative of that false introspection which believes in 'thinking': first an act is imagined which simply does not occur, 'thinking', and secondly a subject-substratum in which every act of thinking, and nothing else, has its origin: that is to say, both the deed and the doer are fictions.<sup>152</sup>

Even 'freedom' for Nietzsche represents the domination of certain instincts:

For what is freedom? That one has the will to self-responsibility. That one preserves the distance which divides us. That one has become more indifferent to hardship, toil, privation, even to life. That one is ready to sacrifice men to one's cause, oneself not excepted. Freedom means that the manly instincts that delight in war and victory have gained mastery over the other instincts-- for example, over the instinct of 'happiness'.<sup>153</sup>

The necessity of a centralized will or 'master drive', which entails "an end to fumbling, straying, to the proliferation of secondary shoots", came to Nietzsche's attention in the music of Wagner: "[W]ithin the most convoluted courses and often daring trajectories assumed by his artistic plans there rules a single inner law, a will, by which they can be explained".<sup>154</sup> Initially, Nietzsche used the term 'spirit' to express "a force

<sup>150</sup> WP 408 [1888]. In a bizarre 'biologization' of the will, however, he traced contemporary weakness of will to the intermingling of races and classes: "The man of an era of dissolution which mixes the races together and who therefore contains within him the inheritance of a diversified descent, that is to say contrary and often not merely contrary drives and values which struggle with one another and rarely leave one another in peace-- such a man of late cultures and broken lights will, on average, be a rather weak man: his fundamental desire is that the war which he *is* should come to an end; happiness appears to him, in accordance with a sedative (for example Epicurean or Christian) medicine and mode of thought, pre-eminently as the happiness of repose, of tranquility, of satiety, of unity at least attained, as a 'Sabbath of Sabbaths' [...]" [BG 121]

<sup>151</sup> BG 37.

<sup>152</sup> WP 263-264 [1887-1888]. Moreover, one could not attribute a thought to wilful action: "[A] thought comes when 'it' wants, not when 'I' want; so that it is a *falsification* of the facts to say: the subject 'I' is the condition of the predicate 'think'." [BG 47]

<sup>153</sup> TI 103.

<sup>154</sup> UM 200.

wholly pure and free", which can direct "the precipitate current of a vehement will which as it were strives to reach up to the light through every runway, cave and crevice, and desires power."<sup>155</sup> This central direction or "higher self"<sup>156</sup> does not merely repress the tumultuous instincts in the manner of Freud's 'superego', but exhibits "loyalty out of free and most selfless love, the creative, innocent, more illuminated sphere to the dark, intractable and tyrannical."<sup>157</sup> This remains consistent with Nietzsche's rejection of ontological 'opposites', contending rather that there are merely gradations of 'becomings' rather than clear-cut dualities in existence.<sup>158</sup> Like the will, Wagner's "overwhelming symphonic intelligence" becomes a 'sorcerer's apprentice', which temporarily secures a harmony of the elements and "out of all this conflict brings forth concord".<sup>159</sup> Such respites among the instincts are fleeting, for the most part, in light of Nietzsche's conception of the storm of self.<sup>160</sup>

Contrary to thousands of years of intellectual endeavour, Nietzsche believed that humanity owes its existence to instinct rather than to consciousness or rationality.<sup>161</sup> As one of the most recent innovations of evolution, consciousness contains the most glitches in humanity's biological 'software': "Consciousness is the last and latest development of

<sup>155</sup> UM 201. Although the 'spirit' was elevated above the 'will' which 'ragged below', Nietzsche identified them as "two drives or spheres" in Wagner. Undoubtedly, the Christian and Hegelian 'baggage' associated with the former term led to its absence in later writings.

<sup>156</sup> UM 228.

<sup>157</sup> UM 203.

<sup>158</sup> With regards to ontological 'opposites', metaphysical philosophies were most guilty of "denying the origin of the one from the other" and "assuming for the more highly valued things some miraculous origin". [HA 13] His antipathy to antipodes stems, in part, from Heraclitus. See Barnes 102. Houlgate observes this 'shared affinity' with Hegel. [Hegel 22]

<sup>159</sup> UM 242. He continued, "Wagner's music as a whole is an image of the world as it was understood by the great Ephesian philosopher [Heraclitus]: a harmony produced by conflict, the unity of justice and enmity." For Heraclitus' views on the universality of conflict and the transformation of opposites, see Barnes 102-107.

<sup>160</sup> The 'master drive' provided a parallel to "the *ruling idea*" [UM 227], which will gain importance in Nietzsche's later thought. See BG 171.

<sup>161</sup> GS 84-85: "If the conserving association of the instincts were not so very much more powerful, if it did not serve on the whole as a regulator, humanity would have to perish of its misjudgements and its fantasies with open eyes, of its lack of thoroughness and its credulity-- in short, of its consciousness." Nietzsche traced the rise of consciousness to the need to communicate dangers and wants to others. As a result, consciousness became a communal canopy of desires and insecurities: "This is the essence of phenomenalism and perspectives as I understand them: Owing to the nature of *animal consciousness*, the world of which we can become conscious is only a surface and sign-world, a world that is made common and meaner; whatever becomes conscious *becomes* by the same token shallow, thin, relatively stupid, general, sign, herd signal [...]" [GS 299-300] See also WP 357 [1883-1888]: "We learn to think less highly of all that is conscious; we unlearn responsibility for ourselves, since we as conscious, purposive creatures, are only the smallest part of

the organic and hence also what is most unfinished and unstrong."<sup>162</sup> Knowledge itself is the product of the instincts, the 'white flag' of a temporary truce hoisted above the subliminal shadows into the rays of conscious thought.<sup>163</sup> Maintaining purity of instinct and avoiding "the many lower and more short-sighted drives which are active in so-called selfless actions" comprise "the test, the final test perhaps, which a Zarathustra has to pass-- the actual *proof* of his strength..."<sup>164</sup> By contrast, repressed dominant instincts vent their fury in acts of self-dissolution and 'bad conscience.'<sup>165</sup>

Nietzsche was, however, extraordinarily wary of using the term, 'will,' on account of its metaphysical associations. Hence, in a journal entry, he once wrote:

*Weakness of the will:* that is a metaphor that can prove misleading. For there is no will, and consequently neither a strong nor a weak will. The multitude and disgregation of impulses and the lack of any systematic order among them result in a 'weak will'; their coordination under a single predominant impulse results in a 'strong will': in the first case it is the oscillation and the lack of gravity; in the latter, the precision and clarity of the direction.<sup>166</sup>

At the same time, however, Nietzsche wanted to avoid the despair arising from volitional entropy-- a flaw in Schopenhauer's thought-- so he emphasized that the will can be modified regardless of its unconscious content.<sup>167</sup> Hence, this carefully nuanced term allowed him to consolidate the 'opposites' of subject and object, chaos and order, world and *Weltanschauung*, reflecting the power which "transforms moments of pathos into interpretations and perspectives through which they become enduring creations."<sup>168</sup>

In *Beyond Good and Evil*, Nietzsche identified three components in human

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us."

<sup>162</sup> GS 84.

<sup>163</sup> GS 261: "Since only the last scenes of reconciliation and the final accounting of this long process rise to our consciousness, we suppose that *intelligence* must be something conciliatory, just and good-- something that stands essentially opposed to the instincts, while it is actually nothing but a *certain behavior of the instincts towards one another*." For reason as "a system of relations between various passions and desires", see WP 208 [1887-1888]. Nietzsche regarded philosophy as a "*misunderstanding of the body*" insofar as it misapprehends the "unconscious disguise of physiological needs under the cloaks of the objective ideal".

[GS 34]

<sup>164</sup> EH 14. Failure to do so resulted in "a man of profound mediocrity." [WP 359 (1883-1888)]

<sup>165</sup> GM 65-67.

<sup>166</sup> WP 28-29 [1888].

<sup>167</sup> GM 7.

<sup>168</sup> Golomb "Nietzsche" 255.



volition. First, there is a physiological component, "a plurality of sensations, namely the sensation of the condition we *leave*, the sensation of the condition towards which we *go*, the sensation of this 'leaving' and 'going' itself, and then also an accompanying muscular sensation". Second, there is an unconscious psychological component, an intersection of diverse emotions and thoughts which coalesce to form "the commanding thought". Third, there is "the affect of command", the conscious attribution of action to personal volition, the glorious-- if at times specious-- self-proclamation, 'I willed it thus'.<sup>169</sup> The person who attributes intentionality to an action thus bolsters a particular 'dominating instinct'. Nietzsche concluded: "He who wills adds in this way the sensations of pleasure of the successful executive agents, the serviceable 'under-wills' or under-souls-- for our body is only a social structure composed of many souls-- to his sensations of pleasure as commander."<sup>170</sup>

It is within this third component of willing that the notion of domination is rooted. According to Nietzsche, "What is called 'freedom of will' is essentially the affect of superiority over him who must obey: 'I am free, "he" must obey'."<sup>171</sup> Such illusions of control even apply to one's own body: "A man who *wills*-- commands something in himself which obeys or which he believes obeys."<sup>172</sup> Nietzsche asserted that belief in a governable body, whether one's own or one's subordinate, is vital to the existential quality of human life:

All *feeling* suffers in me and is in prison: but my *willing* always comes to me as my liberator and bringer of joy. Willing liberates: that is the true doctrine of will and freedom-- thus Zarathustra teaches you. No more to will and no more to evaluate and no more to create! Ah, that this great lassitude may ever stay far from me!<sup>173</sup>

The German philosopher personally doubted whether a person can ever be said to will

<sup>169</sup> BG 48. Ironically, this appears to be a secularized mantra torn from Nietzsche's Lutheran past. Cf. Luther's teaching on a Christian's 'spiritual power': "[I]n all things I can find profit toward salvation so that the cross and death itself are compelled to serve me and to work together with me for my salvation. This is a splendid privilege and hard to attain, a truly omnipotent power, a spiritual dominion in which there is nothing so good and nothing so evil but that it shall work together for good to me, if only I believe." [Luther "Selections" 63-64]

<sup>170</sup> BG 49.

<sup>171</sup> BG 48.

<sup>172</sup> BG 48.

<sup>173</sup> Z 111.



intentionally an action without engaging in hermeneutical gymnastics:

A quantum of force is also a quantum of drive, will, action-- in fact, it is nothing more than this driving, willing, acting, and it is only through the seduction of language (and through the fundamental errors of reason petrified in it)-- language which understands and misunderstands all action as conditioned by an actor, by a 'subject'-- that it can appear otherwise. Just as the common people distinguish lightning from the flash of light and take the latter as *doing*, as the effect of a subject which is called lightning, just so popular morality distinguishes strength from expressions of strength, as if behind the strong individual there were an indifferent substratum which was at *liberty* to express or not to express strength. But no such substratum exists; there is no 'being' behind doing, acting, becoming; 'the doer' is merely a fiction imposed on the doing-- the doing itself is everything.<sup>174</sup>

Nietzsche believed that the volitional 'hard drive' within every individual is dictated by generations of biological and behavioural elements: "But at the bottom of us, 'right down deep', there is, to be sure, something unteachable, a granite stratum of spiritual fate, of predetermined decision and answer to pre-determined selected questions."<sup>175</sup> However, he was able to smuggle a volitional 'file' into the dungeon of spiritual determinism: though the instincts themselves are 'constants', the temporary hierarchies among the instincts are transitional and established primarily through the imaginative faculties.<sup>176</sup> Since knowledge is a product of the instincts, it is possible to reverse the flow:

To this day the task of *incorporating* knowledge and making it instinctive is only beginning to dawn on the human eye and is not yet clearly discernible; it is a task that is seen only by those who have comprehended that so far we have incorporated only our errors and that all our consciousness relates the errors.<sup>177</sup>

This imaginative category of 'willing' provides a means whereby humankind might be moulded and influenced by a cunning philosopher, provided that the species can be liberated from the sociological and metaphysical 'shackles' which currently restrain the instincts of modern Europeans. One cannot but marvel at the audaciousness of a man who fiercely contended: "You know these things as thoughts, but your thoughts are not your experiences, they are an echo and an after-effect of your experiences: as when your room

<sup>174</sup> GM 29. See also TI 60: "The 'inner world' is full of phantoms and false lights: the will is one of them [...] Merely a surface phenomenon of consciousness, an accompaniment to an act, which conceals rather than expresses the *antecedentia* of the act."

<sup>175</sup> BG 162-163.

<sup>176</sup> WP 263-164 [1887-1888].

trembles when a carriage goes past. I however am sitting in the carriage, and often I am the carriage itself."<sup>178</sup>

### C. Combatting the Christian Obstruction:

Nietzsche identified many pernicious movements within the nineteenth century which he blamed for smothering the instincts which benefit the species,<sup>179</sup> since he attacked any politic, creed, or ideology which appeared "not as a means in the struggle between power-complexes, but as a means *against* struggle itself".<sup>180</sup> Such principles deemed "hostile to life" were embodied in communism,<sup>181</sup> socialism,<sup>182</sup> liberalism,<sup>183</sup> democracy,<sup>184</sup> utilitarianism,<sup>185</sup> populist-driven nationalism,<sup>186</sup> women's movements,<sup>187</sup> and most contemporary forms of ethics and religion.<sup>188</sup> However, Nietzsche was a particularly vociferous opponent of Christianity and its doctrine of free will.<sup>189</sup> He first theorized that the doctrine had originated as "an invention of *ruling* classes", who merely projected their socio-political freedoms onto the metaphysical domain.<sup>190</sup> Nietzsche

<sup>177</sup> GS 85.

<sup>178</sup> Z 12.

<sup>179</sup> It is essential to emphasize that Nietzsche did not desire an unleashing of all instincts, but merely those that he deemed "ascending instincts". [WP 217 (1888)]

<sup>180</sup> GM 57.

<sup>181</sup> GM 57.

<sup>182</sup> WP 77 [1885].

<sup>183</sup> BG 52, WP 462 [1888].

<sup>184</sup> GM 129.

<sup>185</sup> TI 80. He similarly attacked the Rousseauian view of social contract, arguing that no two actions can have equal value, thus obviating any exchangeability. [WP 489 (1887-1888)]

<sup>186</sup> BG 171.

<sup>187</sup> BG 166.

<sup>188</sup> GM 129.

<sup>189</sup> Nietzsche did attribute Christianity's decline into mediocrity in part to its servitude to "the mills of state power". [UM 166] Ironically, had he read Luther more closely, he would have found an unexpected ally: "[W]e do everything of necessity, and nothing by 'free-will'", though Nietzsche would have despised the inference of human sinfulness and accompanying appeal to divine grace for genuine liberty. Contra Erasmus, Luther attributed free will to God alone. [Selections 188] In his introduction to Lou Salomé's book, Mandel helpfully situates Nietzsche's views of Christianity within the chaos that ensued following his father's death when his family relocated to Naumburg, whose "terrifying bourgeois conventionality, conformism, and religious conservatism seeped into his being as afflictions he called '*Naumburger Tugend*', a superficial decorum or respectability". [Salomé xiv] Ironically, Bergmann claims that his father's death was instigated by the failed political reforms of Friedrich Wilhelm IV, and their religious accoutrements, with which he strove to revitalize the German state. This led to mass discrediting of Christianity. [180-181] Safranski insightfully links Nietzsche's drive for self-discipline to the vacuum of paternal authority in his life. [32]

<sup>190</sup> NR 57.

attributed the widespread dissemination of this most powerful illusion to human arrogance:

[M]an is the free being in a world of unfreedom, the eternal *miracle worker* whether he does good or ill, the astonishing exception, the superbeast and almost-god, the meaning of creation which cannot be thought away, the solution of the cosmic riddle, the mighty ruler over nature and the despiser of it, the creature which calls *its* history *world history!*-- *Vanitas vanitatum homo.*<sup>191</sup>

However, free will had become a corrupted tool in the hands of the rabble for the sole purpose of ritual condemnation: "[O]ne has deprived becoming of its innocence if being in this or that state is traced back to its will, to intentions, to accountable acts: the doctrine of will has been invented essentially for the purpose of punishment, that is of *finding guilty*."<sup>192</sup>

Nietzsche maintained that the core Christian doctrines of sin and guilt, reward and punishment, were constructed upon the false attribution of causal relations between man's actions and his conscious will-- "a magically effective force"--<sup>193</sup> without due consideration for the intractable nature of human instincts,<sup>194</sup> the inescapable bias of the injured person who judges the 'perpetrator', the unalterable variables of biological lineage and culture, and the 'pinball' erraticism of any given action on account of conflicting wills and unpredictable consequences in the natural world,<sup>195</sup> not to mention the duplicitous means by which the 'righteous' victim gains power over the 'sinner'.<sup>196</sup> In light of the knowledge that "the history of moral feelings is the history of an error, an error called 'responsibility', which in turn rests on an error called 'freedom of the will'",<sup>197</sup> Nietzsche declared that the very act of judging is, itself, the greatest injustice.<sup>198</sup> Because Nietzsche's philosophical project to exhume the 'evil' instincts and return the species to a more

<sup>191</sup> NR 199.

<sup>192</sup> TI 64. See also NR 58: "Now, belief in freedom of the will is incompatible precisely with the idea of a continuous, homogeneous, undivided, indivisible flowing: it presupposes that *every individual action is isolate and indivisible*; it is an *atomism* in the domain of willing and knowing."

<sup>193</sup> GS 183.

<sup>194</sup> BG 63.

<sup>195</sup> HA 43-44.

<sup>196</sup> "Oh, how much superfluous cruelty and vivisection have proceeded from those religions which invented sin! And from those people who desired by means of it to gain the highest enjoyment of their power!" [*Daybreak*, cited in Golomb "De-Nazify" 33] Cf. Feuerbach 74: "Supplication is the means, under the guise of humility and submission, of exercising one's power and superiority over another being."

<sup>197</sup> HA 43. He later declared that, "[t]rue modesty" entails the awareness that "we are not our own creations" and therefore not responsible for our actions. [HA 248]

'natural' evolutionary trajectory conflicted with the conventional morality of the nineteenth century, he sought to undermine the transcendental truth claims of Christian ethics.<sup>199</sup> Hence, he argued,

[B]etween good and evil actions there is no difference in type; at most, a difference in degree. Good actions are sublimated evil actions; evil actions are good actions become coarse and stupid. The individual's only demand, for self-enjoyment (along with the fear of losing it), is satisfied in all circumstances: man may act as he can, that is, as he must, whether in deeds of vanity, revenge, pleasure, usefulness, malice, cunning, or in deeds of sacrifice, pity, knowledge.<sup>200</sup>

Because Nietzsche regarded Christianity as the venomous prodigy of *r  s  ntiment* by the masses against the privileged classes,<sup>201</sup> he exclaimed: "I call Christianity the *one* great curse, the *one* great intrinsic depravity, the *one* great instinct for revenge for which no expedient is sufficiently poisonous, secret, subterranean, *petty*-- I call it the *one* immortal blemish of mankind..."<sup>202</sup> By contrast, Nietzsche forbade men from judging the will to power: "For this is the doctrine preached by life itself to all that has life: the morality of development. To have and to want to have more-- *growth*, in one word-- that is life itself."<sup>203</sup> Because of the close interrelationality of the world and its events, one cannot condemn an action without condemning the entire man,<sup>204</sup> or even the world itself:

The concept 'reprehensible action' presents us with difficulties. Nothing that happened at all can be reprehensible in itself: for one should not want to eliminate it: for everything is so bound up with everything else that to want to exclude something means to exclude everything. A reprehensible action means: a

<sup>198</sup> UM 35, HA 44.

<sup>199</sup> *The Genealogy of Morality* exposed the relativity and transience of seemingly 'timeless' values. See also NR 91: "Whoever has overthrown an existing law of custom has hitherto always first been accounted a *bad man*: but when, as did happen, the law could not afterwards be reinstated and this fact was accepted the predicate gradually changed;-- history treats almost exclusively of these *bad men* who subsequently became *good men*!" Nietzsche's observation was not a novel one, however, as he was 'scooped' by Pascal two hundred years earlier! See Pascal 46: "Larceny, incest, infanticide, parricide, everything has at some time been accounted a virtuous action." Nietzsche highly regarded "Pascal, whom I almost love, since he has taught me such an infinite amount; the only *logical* Christian." [Brandes 94]

<sup>200</sup> HA 75. Principles of pain and pleasure are, of course, rooted in one's feelings of power. See WP [1888] 371.

<sup>201</sup> HA 68-69. Because people wrongly believe that a transgressor could have chosen not to commit the infraction, Nietzsche wrote, "This belief in his choice arouses hatred, thirst for revenge, spite, the whole deterioration of our imagination; whereas we get much less angry at an animal because we consider it irresponsible." [HA 69] Ironically, here Nietzsche agreed with Christ in saying, 'Judge not!' [NR 81]

<sup>202</sup> TI 199. Cf. Feuerbach, who regarded religion with its illusory nature as "profoundly injurious in its effect of mankind". [274]

<sup>203</sup> WP 77 [1885].

<sup>204</sup> WP 180 [1887-1888].



reprehended world--<sup>205</sup>

In contradistinction to an exuberant acceptance of the world and all of its contingencies, Christianity sacrifices the temporal for the eternal, thus 'depriving life as such of its centre of gravity.'<sup>206</sup> This 'myth' of the afterlife is merely "a moral optical-illusion", a metaphysical asylum from the natural world whereby, "[W]e *revenge* ourselves on life by means of the phantasmagoria of 'another', a 'better' life."<sup>207</sup> Hence, Nietzsche deplored Christianity as a "thoroughly thought-out method of psychological counterfeiting":<sup>208</sup> "Nothing but imaginary *causes* ('God', 'soul', 'ego', 'spirit', 'free will'-- or 'unfree will'): nothing but imaginary *effects* ('sin', 'redemption', 'grace', 'punishment', forgiveness of sins')."<sup>209</sup>

#### D. Concerning the Particular: Nietzsche's 'Magnificent Monsters':

In light of his dismissal of societal conventions and emphasis on liberating the instincts, it is easy to portray Nietzsche as a histrionic revolutionary, bent on civilization's plunge into anarchy. However, Nietzsche's rallying cries were intended for a select audience only, his calls for freedom limited to 'nobler' ears.<sup>210</sup> Within any human community, he identified three distinct yet interdependent ranks of individuals: "the most spiritual human beings", who break old barriers to found new religions, customs, and mores; "the guardians of the law", who safeguard a culture's venerated traditions and include both royalty and the nobility; and the working classes, who engage in "the crafts, trade, agriculture, *science*, the greater part of art, in a word the entire compass of *professional* activity", and all of whom would be "out of place among the elite".<sup>211</sup> The

<sup>205</sup> WP 165 [1888].

<sup>206</sup> TI 167. See also Z 42.

<sup>207</sup> TI 49.

<sup>208</sup> WP 212 [1887-1888]. See also HA 85, 94, 230.

<sup>209</sup> TI 137. See also EH 67.

<sup>210</sup> Z 299, EH 24.

<sup>211</sup> TI 191. Zarathustra compared the three classes to 'camels' [society's 'beasts of burden'], 'lions' [society's rulers], and a 'child'-- "innocence and forgetfulness, a new beginning, a sport, a self-propelling wheel, a first motion, a sacred Yes." [Z 54-55] Cf. Heraclitus: "Eternity is a child at play, playing draughts: the kingdom is a child's." [Barnes 102] Richardson also identifies a three-fold "typology" in Nietzsche's anthropology, though he regards them as "types of directed behavior: basic different ways the complex practices making up a person's life can be organized and enacted." [52] For 'master' and 'slave' as "basic modalities of individual existence", see White 683. Golomb quotes Nietzsche's statement that mediation



last and most populous class uniformly seeks happiness through service, "the kind of *happiness* of which the great majority are alone capable, which makes intelligent machines of them. For the mediocre it is happiness to be mediocre; mastery in one thing, specialization, is for them a natural instinct."<sup>212</sup> Attempts to impose universal standards and mores over all humankind constitute the ultimate injustice for Nietzsche, since different classes of men are subject to different standards and 'necessities':

Over one man *necessity* stands in the shape of his passions, over another as the habit of hearing and obeying, over a third as a logical conscience, over a fourth as caprice and a mischievous pleasure in escapades. These four will, however, seek the *freedom* of their will precisely where each of them is most firmly fettered [...] How does this happen? Evidently because each considers himself most free where his *feeling of living* is greatest; thus, as we have said, in passion, in duty, in knowledge, in mischievousness respectively.<sup>213</sup>

As a result of his 'class' consciousness, Nietzsche's philosophy is pervaded by a sociological and ethical conservatism which prohibits movement beyond one's natural rank and advocates different laws for different echelons of society.<sup>214</sup> Humankind must come to the conclusion that, "it is *immoral* to say: 'What is good for one is good for another.'"<sup>215</sup> This way, humanity realigns itself with what Nietzsche observed in the natural world: "Order of rank among capacities; distance; the art of dividing without making inimical; mixing up nothing, 'reconciling' nothing; a tremendous multiplicity which is none the less the opposite of chaos-- this has been the precondition, the protracted secret labour and artistic working of my instinct."<sup>216</sup> In an effort to shape the future, Nietzsche identified the discipline and skills he cherished within the elevated caste of the past, the nobility, whose members "inherited and cultivated a proper mastery and subtlety in

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between master and slave morality occurs within "all higher and mixed cultures" and "even within the same man". [BG 195, cited in "De-Nazify" 33]

<sup>212</sup> TI 191. Nietzsche defined slaves according to *otium*: "Today as always, men fall into two groups: slaves and free men. Whoever does not have two-thirds of his day for himself, is a slave, whatever he may be: a statesman, a businessman, an official, or a scholar." [HA 171]. See also GS 91.

<sup>213</sup> NR 57.

<sup>214</sup> TI 134, and WP 162 [1883-1888]: "My philosophy aims at an ordering of rank: not an individualistic morality. The ideas of the herd should rule in the herd-- but not reach beyond it: the leaders of the herd require a fundamentally different valuation for their own actions, as do the independent, or the 'beasts of prey', etc." This social conservatism is traceable to Plato: "Plato explained [...] it should be impossible ever to mingle or confound the order of castes [...]" [UM 119]

<sup>215</sup> BG 151.

<sup>216</sup> EH 35.

conducting a war against oneself, that is to say self-control, self-outwitting."<sup>217</sup> It is necessary to examine Nietzsche's historical interpretations of the aristocracy of the past in order to elucidate the plight of the slave-dominated present and Nietzsche's hope for the future, the arrival of the *Übermensch*.<sup>218</sup>

# 1. Masters of the Past:

Throughout his writing career, Nietzsche identified the creation of new values as the primary task of the philosopher. However, he ascribed different labours to different classes within a spiritual 'caste' system:

It is the duty of these scholars ["philosophical labourers and men of science"<sup>219</sup>] to take everything that has hitherto happened and been valued, and make it clear, distinct, intelligible and manageable, to abbreviate everything long, even 'time' itself, and to *subdue* the entire past: a tremendous and wonderful task in the service of which every subtle pride, every tenacious will can certainly find satisfaction. *Actual philosophers, however, are commanders and law-givers*: they say 'thus it *shall* be!', it is they who determine the Wherefore and Whither of mankind, and they possess for this task the preliminary work of all the philosophical labourers, of all those who have subdued the past-- they reach for the future with creative hand, and everything that is or has been becomes for them a means, an instrument, a hammer. Their 'knowing' is *creating*, their creating is a law-giving, their will to truth is-- *will to power*.<sup>220</sup>

In an encyclopaedia article on Nietzsche, Clark explains that Nietzsche's relationship to history is revisionist, not restorational: he seeks to free the future from the fundamental valuational errors of the past.<sup>221</sup> In effect, Nietzsche's revaluational mastery of history consists of the redefinition of what is truly 'human.' Although all humans instinctively pursue the furtherance of their personal power, history testifies to men of refinement who cultivated that pursuit to the level of art, men who 'lived contemporaneously with one another' "across the desert intervals of time" like Schopenhauer's "republic of genius".<sup>222</sup>

<sup>217</sup> BG 122.

<sup>218</sup> I will follow Gemes in employing the untranslated term, *Übermensch*, with its emphasis on 'overcoming', rather than the phrase "higher man". See Gemes 358 n. 34.

<sup>219</sup> Nietzsche unflatteringly referred to scholars as "the spiritual middle-class"! [GS 334] Scholarship represented the nadir of creativity: "Like those who stand in the street and stare at the people passing by, so they too wait and stare at thoughts that others have thought." [Z 147]

<sup>220</sup> BG 142-143.

<sup>221</sup> Clark 859.

<sup>222</sup> UM 111. Salomé contends that "the cult of genius"--i.e., "[t]he representation of the single, noble

Such 'proud' men

feel good only at the sight of unbroken men who might become their enemies and at the sight of all possessions that are hard to come by. Against one who is suffering they are often hard because he is not worthy of their aspirations and pride; but they are doubly obliging toward their *peers* whom it would be honourable to fight if the occasion should ever arise. Spurred by the good feeling of *this* perspective, the members of the knightly caste became accustomed to treating each other with exquisite courtesy.<sup>223</sup>

According to Nietzsche, the actions of the nobility remain consistent with the amoral will to power which courses throughout the natural universe and whose emanations they more purely embody:

Even that body within which, as was previously assumed, individuals treat one another as equals-- this happens in every healthy aristocracy-- must, if it is a living and not a decaying body, itself do all that to other bodies which the individuals within it refrain from doing to one another: it will have to be the will to power incarnate, it will want to grow, expand, draw to itself, gain ascendancy-- not out of any morality or immorality, but because it *lives*, and because life *is* will to power.<sup>224</sup>

Nietzsche accepted the existence of a ruling elite over the vast majority as essential to the development of 'high' culture. Hence, in a preface to an unpublished work entitled, "The Greek State", he wrote: "In order to have a broad, deep and fertile soil for artistic development, the overwhelming majority must be slavishly subjected to the necessities of life in order to serve a minority beyond the measure of its individual needs [...]"<sup>225</sup> Through his philological excavations, Nietzsche uncovered an ancient value system in which the good consisted in what was 'noble' and the bad consisted in what was

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solitary, for whose sake alone the remaining 'mass products of nature' exist"-- is a Schopenhauerian theme which Nietzsche "never relinquished", [46] though it was greatly truncated during his period of disaffection from Wagner. [66] For parallels with Hegel, see Kaufmann *Nietzsche* 329. Kaufmann distinguishes Nietzsche from the lurking utilitarian sentiments of Carlyle's "hero-worship", since Nietzsche's heroes justify the existence of society-- not vice versa. [*Nietzsche* 313] For "[h]is basic principle of anthropodicy, according to which mankind and history are justified only by the birth of a genius", see Safranski 191. Bergmann attributes the rise of the 'cult of the superior man' to the collapse of "the liberal dream of an enlightened public opinion guided by the educated element in society" following the upheavals of 1848. [181]

<sup>223</sup> GS 87. Such passages seemingly refute Tanner, who claims that Nietzsche harboured "lifelong doubts" about "the concept of the heroic", [*Nietzsche* 8] although Nietzsche clearly rejected Romanticism proper with its metaphysical undercarriage by the time of *Human, All Too Human* [24]

<sup>224</sup> BG 194.

<sup>225</sup> Safranski 74.

'common.'<sup>226</sup>

The judgment 'good' does *not* derive from those to whom 'goodness' is shown! Rather, the 'good' themselves-- that is, the noble, the powerful, the superior, and the high-minded-- were the ones who felt themselves and their actions to be good -- that is, as of the first rank-- and posited them as such, in contrast to everything low, low-minded, common, and plebeian.<sup>227</sup>

The strength of this 'master-based' value system was a reflection of the physical and psychological vibrancy of the upper echelons of society. Hence, Nietzsche wrote, "The knightly-aristocratic value-judgments presuppose a powerful physicality, a rich, burgeoning, even over-flowing health, as well as those things which help to preserve it-- war, adventure, hunting, dancing, competitive games, and everything which involves strong, free, high-spirited activity."<sup>228</sup> In summary, master morality encapsulated an unrestrained, unapologetic lust for life, and the nobility itself came to personify "a complete automatism of instinct", which, for Nietzsche, constituted "the precondition of any kind of mastery."<sup>229</sup>

According to Nietzsche, the preservation of the aristocratic ideal was a combination of careful cultural nurturing-- "the accumulatory labour of generations"--<sup>230</sup> and sudden, unexpected avatarial emergences. In addition to the gentry's attempts to cradle a small flicker of human excellence within the 'cupped hands' of "the pathos of distance",<sup>231</sup> far from the 'madding crowds', a 'phoenix' like Napoleon could rise inexplicably from the

<sup>226</sup> Mandel highlights a monograph Nietzsche wrote on the Greek oligarch Theognis, who praised the morality of his fellow leaders as "good" versus the "bad" morality of the commoners. [Salomé xvii] White posits that the master is modeled after Kant's view of God, who "is not commanded to good actions because everything he does is *ipso facto* a creation of 'the good'." [688-689]

<sup>227</sup> GM 12. See also HA 47. Like Hegel's master-slave dialectic, Nietzsche did not locate this morality clash within a specific historical context. Rather, he ascribed it to "those extended periods of the 'morality of custom' which preceded 'world history'". [GM 93] Reflecting his love of pre-Socratic Greece and disdain for Christianity, he once asserted, "[E]verything *essential* in human development occurred in primeval times, long before those four thousand years with which we are more or less familiar." [HA 14]

<sup>228</sup> GM 19. Nietzsche also juxtaposed biological and cultural factors, attributing wealth as the deciding factor for securing beautiful mates, solid education, cleanliness, and physical exercise without "dulling physical labour." [HA 231]

<sup>229</sup> TI 189.

<sup>230</sup> TI 112.

<sup>231</sup> Nietzsche defined "pathos of distance" as "the chasm between man and man, class and class, the multiplicity of types, the will to be oneself, to stand out", and claimed that it "characterizes every *strong* age." [TI 102] He later described it as the mark of a 'gentleman', the "first thing in which I 'test the reins' of a person". [EH 93] For its centrality to self-overcoming, see BG 192.



plebeian ashes of post-Revolution France.<sup>232</sup> The great men who foreshadowed the momentous changes in the species were not confined to the hereditary gentry, and included men like Goethe, Beethoven, Stendhal, Heine, Schopenhauer, and-- at times-- Wagner.<sup>233</sup> Furthermore, Nietzsche did not consider all aristocrats to be higher types of men. Rather, the aristocratic institutions acted as an 'incubator' for those rare and exceptional, era-embodying specimens, whom he regarded as "suddenly emerging late ghosts of past cultures and their powers-- as atavisms of a people and its *mores*."<sup>234</sup> Instead of focusing on the aristocrats themselves, Nietzsche esteemed the ideal they represented, a 'spiritual nobility' which seeks to embrace and master life and all of its vicissitudes.<sup>235</sup> Yet such 'noble' souls were the paradoxically acculturated prodigies of natural instincts, who alone were destined to scale Olympian heights on the wings of philosophy:

In the last resort there exists an order of rank of states of soul with which the order of rank of problems accords; and the supreme problems repel without mercy everyone who ventures near them without being, through the elevation and power of his spirituality, predestined to their solution [...]. For every elevated world one has to be born or, expressed more clearly, *bred* for it: one has a right to philosophy-- taking the word in the grand sense-- only by virtue of one's origin; one's ancestors, one's 'blood' are the decisive thing here too. Many generations must have worked to prepare for the philosopher; each of his virtues must have been individually acquired, tended, inherited, incorporated, and not only the bold, easy, delicate course and cadence of his thoughts but above all the readiness for great responsibilities, the lofty glance that rules and looks down, the feeling of being segregated from the mob and its duties and virtues, the genial protection and defence of that which is misunderstood and calumniated, be it god or devil, the pleasure in and exercise of grand justice, the art of commanding, the breadth of will, the slow eye which seldom admires, seldom looks upward, seldom

<sup>232</sup> GM 36.

<sup>233</sup> BG 189. Examples of "the *strong* German type" included Handel, Leibniz, and Bismarck. [WP 471-472 (1887)] Houlgate adds an important qualifier: "When he does praise political figures, however, it is usually because of their 'heroic' style, rather than because of specific political achievements [...]" [*Hegel* 245 n. 180]

<sup>234</sup> GS 84. However, preserving class and cultural boundaries becomes essential since, "It is pre-eminently in the generations and castes that *conserve* a people that we encounter such recrudescences of old habits while such atavisms are improbable wherever races, habits, and valuations change too rapidly." In contrast to northern Europe, Nietzsche identified a contemporary 'nobility' in Italy which transcended class. In speaking of Genoa, he wrote: "But what you find *here* upon turning any corner is a human being [...] who knows the sea, adventure, and the Orient; a human being who abhors the law and the neighbor as a kind of boredom and who measures everything old and established with envious eyes." [GS 234]

<sup>235</sup> This allowed Nietzsche to distinguish himself from his own humble origins: "One is least related to one's parents [...]. Higher natures have their origins infinitely further back, and with them much had to be assembled, saved and hoarded. The great individuals are the oldest: I don't understand it, but Julius Caesar could be my father-- or Alexander, this Dionysos incarnate..." [EH 12]



loves...<sup>236</sup>

Throughout his writings, Nietzsche highlighted several distinctive traits of the aristocratic ideal, which would become pivotal in his formulations of the masters of the future. First, members of the nobility embody a leisurely principle towards life-- nothing 'forces' their hand, whether decadence or duty, country or courtesan.<sup>237</sup> This bolsters a second essential attribute, genuine independence: "Few are made for independence-- it is a privilege of the strong. And he who attempts it, having the completest right to it but without being *compelled* to, thereby proves that he is probably not only strong but also daring to the point of recklessness."<sup>238</sup> Independence flows from and into a third aspect, a super-abundance of power which is its own justification and has nothing to prove:

The born aristocrats of the spirit are not overeager; their creations blossom and fall from the trees on a quiet autumn evening, being neither rashly desired, not hastened on, nor supplanted by new things. The wish to create incessantly is vulgar, betraying jealousy, envy, and ambition. If one is something, one does not actually need to do anything-- and nevertheless does a great deal. There is a type higher than the 'productive' man.<sup>239</sup>

Based on these traits, the spiritual aristocracy will transcend conventional morality and metaphysics, giving free range to their instincts at the expense of societal mores, religion, and reason itself.<sup>240</sup> Hence, they will act as existential 'frontiersmen' of the

<sup>236</sup> BG 145-146. Kaufmann argues against accusations of 'biologism' against Nietzsche, citing his belief that "race mixture might favor the attainment of culture-- both in nations and individuals." [Nietzsche 288] He also contends that Nietzsche's myth of Polish ancestry reflects his desire to be of mixed blood. However, surely his growing aversion to all things German motivated the Polish myth. Furthermore, his passion for purity and abhorrence of hybrids are underlying currents in his thought. See, for example, Z 258, BG 40, 136-137, 182, WP [1888] 461, EH 14, 18.

<sup>237</sup> WP 479 [1887].

<sup>238</sup> BG 60.

<sup>239</sup> HA 126. It must be observed that the true nobleman has nothing to prove by either creation or destruction. Hence, he does not become an anti-hero or poster-boy of nihilism. Nietzsche conceded that the nobleman would pass through a 'youthful' stage of breaking away from his contextual norms-- the "will to self-determination"-- however, the tumultuous growth spurts of this 'spiritual puberty' are a means, not an ends. [HA 6-7] Kaufmann observes that this non-revolutionary thrust is commonly misapprehended in many expositions of Nietzsche. [WP 468 n. 5]

<sup>240</sup> GS 77: "Compared to them [the "common type"], the higher type is more *unreasonable*, for those who are noble, magnanimous, and self-sacrificial do succumb to their instincts, and when they are at their best, their reason *pauses*." His indebtedness to Machiavelli is most evident here. In a notebook entry, he wrote: "Now, no philosopher will be in any doubt as to the type of perfection in politics; that is Machiavellianism." [WP 170 (1887-1888)] Like Machiavelli, he advocated the usefulness of an external allegiance to religious convention when beneficial to ruling. [BG 86] Cf. Machiavelli 56. Nietzsche once observed that, when religion is no longer a useful tool for a particular state, it will "treat religion as a private matter and consign it

human spirit, blazing new trails across previously untraveled regions of politics, aesthetics, and experience, "preserving the species" from the banalities of the staid and stagnant "farmers of the spirit":

The strongest and most evil spirits have so far done the most to advance humanity: again they relumed the passions that were going to sleep-- all ordered society puts the passions to sleep-- and they re-awakened again and again the sense of comparison, of contradiction, of the pleasure in what is new, daring, untried; they compelled men to pit opinion against opinion, model against model. Usually by force of arms, by toppling boundary markers, by violating pieties-- but also by means of new religions and moralities [...]<sup>241</sup>

In this way, the aristocratic class will cultivate autonomous, instinctual spiritual innovators, the "noble type of man" who "feels *himself* to be the determiner of values; he does not need to be approved of, he judges 'what harms me is harmful in itself', he knows himself to be that which in general first accords honour to things, he *creates values*."<sup>242</sup> Ultimately, he will arrive at the pinnacle of human development, the banishment of all hatred in place of the 'creator-god's' unconditional love for the natural universe,<sup>243</sup>

that enormous, overflowing certainty and health which cannot do without even illness itself, as an instrument and fishhook of knowledge; [...] that *mature* freedom of the spirit which is fully as much self-mastery and discipline of the heart, and which permits paths to many opposing ways of thought [...], the inner spaciousness and cossetting of a superabundance which precludes the danger that the spirit might lose itself on its own paths and fall in love and stay put, intoxicated, in some nook; [...] that excess of vivid healing, reproducing, reviving powers, the very sign of *great* health, an excess that gives the free spirit the dangerous privilege of being permitted to live *experimentally* and to offer himself to adventure: the privilege of the master free spirit!<sup>244</sup>

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to the conscience and habits of each individual." [HA 224]

<sup>241</sup> GS 79.

<sup>242</sup> BG 195.

<sup>243</sup> GM 24: "For the *r  s  ntiment* of the noble man himself, if it appears at all, completes and exhausts itself in an immediate reaction. For that reason, it does not *poison* [...] To be incapable of taking one's enemies, accidents, even one's *misdeeds* seriously for long-- such is the sign of strong full natures, natures in possession of a surplus of the power to shape, form, and heal, of the power which also enables one to forget [...]"

<sup>244</sup> HA 7-8.

## 2. The Present Plight: The Herd is the Word:

The image of the noble spirit reaches titan-ian heights in Nietzsche. After asking what makes a person 'noble', he answered that it was a supreme passion, "the feeling of heat in things that feel cold to everybody else; the discovery of values for which no scales have been invented yet; offering sacrifices on altars that are dedicated to an unknown god; a courage without any desire for honors; a self-sufficiency that overflows and gives to man and things."<sup>245</sup> Because these noble spirits are rare indeed, no tenet or principle must be allowed to squelch the sheer exceptionality of such persons. In an intriguing 'marriage' of physiological and cultural determinants, Nietzsche regarded the aristocracy's will to power as something inherited, preserved, and concentrated from generation to generation, provided that classes and races aren't diluted through interbreeding.<sup>246</sup> Hence, he derided the contemporary malaise of Europe as,

the most spiritual expression of a certain complex physiological condition called in ordinary language nervous debility and sickliness; it arises whenever races or classes long separated from one another are decisively and suddenly crossed. In the new generation, which has as it were inherited varying standards and values in its blood, all is unrest, disorder, doubt, experiment; the most vital forces have a retarding effect, the virtues themselves will not let one another grow and become strong, equilibrium, centre of balance, upright certainty are lacking in body and soul. But that which becomes most profoundly sick and degenerates in such hybrids is the *will* [...] Our Europe of today, the scene of a senselessly sudden attempt at radical class-- and *consequently* race-- mixture, is as a result sceptical from top to bottom [...]<sup>247</sup>

Originally, the "masses" were unremarkable for Nietzsche apart from three considerations: "first as faded copies of great men produced on poor paper with worn-out plates, then as a force of resistance to great men, finally as instruments in the hands of great men".<sup>248</sup> In an ironic twist of 'feat', the current scenario in which slave culture and morality predominates over master morality and culture was inadvertently precipitated by

<sup>245</sup> GS 117. Cf. Goethe's griffin: "Let us then grasp for beauties, empire, gold,/ For fortune smiles on him whose grip is bold." [Goethe II 109]

<sup>246</sup> Contrary to Nazism, however, Nietzsche did not restrict 'master races' to Arian nations, but included "Roman, Arab, German, Japanese nobility, Homeric heroes, Scandinavian Vikings". [GM 26]

<sup>247</sup> BG 136-137. See also BG 152, 199; GM 109. Zarathustra likewise denounced 'the herd' for its interbreedness: "Rabble-hotchpotch: in that everything is mixed up with everything else, saint and scoundrel and gentleman and Jew and every beast out of Noah's Ark." [Z 258]

the strength of the masters. Nietzsche contended that, as the historical aristocracy brought more power to bear upon their vassals, "a vast quantity of freedom" was "forcibly made latent" and began compounding across the centuries.<sup>249</sup> In addition, the slaves' 'natural' faith in the superiority of the masters was tarnished by the corruption of certain Roman emperors: "For at bottom the masses are willing to submit to slavery of any kind, if only the higher-ups constantly legitimize themselves as higher, as *born* to command-- by having noble manners."<sup>250</sup> Hence, the slaves were ripe for revolt, although their subjugation benefited both the species in general and the slaves themselves.<sup>251</sup>

In an apparent excerpt from the sermon dossier of Dostoyevsky's Grand Inquisitor, Nietzsche declared that the majority of men covet the collective security which a hierarchical society offers: "To be alone, to experience things by oneself, neither to obey nor to rule, to be an individual-- that was not a pleasure but a punishment; one was sentenced 'to individuality'."<sup>252</sup> Moreover, slaves need to be mastered-- both physically and spiritually-- in order to thrive, a craving which manifests itself particularly in religiosity among slaves: "If one considers what need people have of an external regulation to constrain and steady them, how compulsion, *slavery* in a higher sense, is the sole and final condition under which the person of weaker will, woman especially, can prosper; then one also understands the nature of conviction, 'faith'."<sup>253</sup> His peculiar conception of 'existential heredity' whereby one inherits habit and psychology approximated a subtle strand of 'spiritual predestination.' Hence, Nietzsche wrote,

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<sup>248</sup> UM 113.

<sup>249</sup> GM 67.

<sup>250</sup> GS 107. See also WP 468 [1884]: "When Nero and Caracalla sat up there, the paradox arose: 'the lowest man is worth more than that man up there!' And the way was prepared for an image of God that was as remote as possible from the image of the most powerful-- the god on the cross!" Decadence not only incites the slaves, it also minimizes the masters' powers of resistance. See Richardson 64.

<sup>251</sup> On the "joy" that ensues for "the weaker that wants to become a function", see GS 176. Richardson formulates a three-stage process of subjection, resentment, and nihilism through which the slave passes, [58] but this seems a bit stilted given that *r  s  ntiment* always appears to characterize the slaves.

<sup>252</sup> GS 175. See Dostoyevsky 295, where the Inquisitor argued that the crowds begged the clergy to spare them the 'horrific' freedom which Christ unleashed upon them. Nietzsche believed that Christ inadvertently helped to eradicate genius when he "furthered men's stupidity, took the side of the intellectually weak, and kept the greatest intellect from being produced". [HA 145]

<sup>253</sup> TI 185. For master power as the necessary locus of faith for the slaves, see GS 289: "Faith is always coveted most and needed most urgently where will is lacking, for will, as the affect of command, is the decisive sign of sovereignty and strength. In other words, the less one knows how to command, the more urgently one covets someone who commands, who commands severely-- a god, prince, class, physician,



That which his ancestors most liked to do and most constantly did cannot be erased from a man's soul [...]. It is quite impossible that a man should *not* have in his body the qualities and preferences of his parents and forefathers: whatever appearances may say to the contrary. This constitutes the problem of race.<sup>254</sup>

Because slavery was presupposed in the amoral 'natural' universe in which humankind dwells, the cultural and political slave uprising was inherently 'unnatural' and inimical to life itself.<sup>255</sup> In addition to numerical advantages, the slave revolution received crucial assistance in their victory over the nobility. Nietzsche believed that the main factor which eventually led to the spectacular collapse of master values was a schism among the nobility itself whereby a disenfranchised group of aristocrats, crippled by physical and/or political weakness, sought power in a new way.<sup>256</sup> Initially, the religious sphere was derived from the political in accordance with "the rule that the political concept of rank always transforms itself into a spiritual concept of rank".<sup>257</sup> However, at some point, the priests unleashed a devastating, psychological warfare upon their own class, instigating an ethical revolution: the 'poisoning' of master values (strength, power, pride, vengeance, autonomy) as 'evil', and the elevation of slave values (subjugation, humility, compassion, industriousness, weakness) as 'good'.<sup>258</sup> Furthermore, the priests dissolved the previous valuational boundaries which had formerly restricted master virtues to masters and

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father confessor, dogma, or party conscience."

<sup>254</sup> BG 203. Nietzsche listed three traits-- "untoward intemperance", "narrow enviousness", and "obstinate self-assertiveness" as endemic to "the plebeian type", asserting that "qualities of this sort must be transferred to the child as surely as bad blood; and the best education and culture will succeed only in *deceiving* with regard to such an inheritance." According to Schacht, Nietzsche unquestioningly embraced "the Lamarckian notion of the biological heritability or transmission of acquired characteristics". [335] See also Kaufmann *Nietzsche* 304.

<sup>255</sup> Slaves were useful to society, so long as they remembered their place. Slavery provided a vital historical counter-weight to the excess of will to power which threatened to destroy sixteenth-century Europe. [BG 144] Furthermore, the prosperity of the nobility depended upon the well-being of the lower classes; thus, Nietzsche forbade the exception from trying to become the rule. [GS 131] He also derided rampant individualism, which squandered the societal 'power supply' by producing many 'individualettes' rather than one extraordinary individual: "What does the Renaissance prove? That the reign of the individual has to be brief." [WP 57 (1888)]

<sup>256</sup> On the direct connection between priesthood and ill health, see HA 88, GM 18. Clark cites envy as a contributing cause in the revolt. [854]

<sup>257</sup> GM 17.

<sup>258</sup> GM 18. A similar observation on priests is made by Goethe: "They, more than other men, were implicated:/ Revolt arose, revolt was consecrated," [Goethe II 223] The priests were another painful reminder of Darwin's erroneous theory: "Species do *not* grow more perfect: the weaker dominate the strong again and again-- the reason being they are the great majority, and they are also *cleverer*.... Darwin forgot the mind (-- that is English!): *the weak possess more mind*...." [TI 87]



conferred slave virtues solely upon slaves.<sup>259</sup> In place of this two-tier system, the priests advocated slave morality as a universal moral code regardless of rank or class.

Consequently, the priest rose to supremacy and the 'herd' became the word throughout Europe:

Men not noble enough to see the abysmal disparity in order of rank and abyss of rank between men and man-- it is *such* men who, with their 'equal before God', have hitherto ruled over the destiny of Europe, until at last a shrunken, almost ludicrous species, a herd animal, something full of good will, sickly and mediocre has been bred, the European of today...<sup>260</sup>

Nietzsche was unsurprisingly infuriated by this 'unfortunate' turn of events, particularly since it constituted a direct rejection of the 'natural' order: "To demand of strength that it should *not* express itself as strength, that it should *not* be a will to overcome, overthrow, dominate, a thirst for enemies and resistance and triumph, makes as little sense as to demand of weakness that it should express itself as strength."<sup>261</sup> The actions of the priests were not motivated by extreme munificence-- like those of the higher nobles-- but by disease, frailty, and the most sordid hatred of life and health.<sup>262</sup> This *r  s  ntiment* was concentrated in the ultimate weapon of cruelty against instinct and one of the purest manifestations of will to power, though deplorably directed against life itself,<sup>263</sup> the ascetic ideal:

<sup>259</sup> It is again important to stress that slave morality, when confined to slaves, is good and proper for the well-being of civilization, according to Nietzsche: "As soon as there is a desire to take this principle further, however, and if possible even as the *fundamental principle of society*, it at once reveals itself for what it is: as the will to the denial of life, as the principle of dissolution and decay." [BG 193-194]

<sup>260</sup> BG 89. He also blamed universal education for providing commoners with the opportunity to pee in the intellectual gene pool: "Life is a fountain of delight; but where the rabble also drinks all wells are poisoned." [Z 120] When properly administered, however, education is useful in converting men into 'intelligent tools' by divorcing pleasure from duty and inculcating the "sublime monotony" of routine, repetitive tasks. [WP 474 (1887, 1888)]

<sup>261</sup> GM 29. For this reason, I disagree with Tanner's statement that Nietzsche does not condemn the herd-men and is "simply not interested in them". [44] Although they are not the primary focus of his 'breeding' project, [Houlgate *Hegel* 244 n. 161] their relationship to the 'higher man'-- and ability to thwart his arrival -- is more dialectical than first appears. A stronger, better disciplined slave class can only enhance a stronger elite. Houlgate's dichotomization between Nietzsche's endorsement of the strong and his opposition of the weak is a bit oversimplified. See *Hegel* 72.

<sup>262</sup> Hence, he exclaimed, "Priests are, as is well-known, the *most evil enemies*-- but why? Because they are the most powerless. From powerlessness their hatred grows to take on a monstrous and sinister shape, the most cerebral and most poisonous form." [GM 19] Ironically, it would seem that aggression mounted against persons of higher rank qualifies as *r  s  ntiment*, whereas aggression towards peers and 'worthy' adversaries forms an essential part of true mastery for Nietzsche. See EH 17.

<sup>263</sup> "But to attack the passions at their roots means to attack life at its roots: the practice of the Church is *hostile to life*..." [TI 52] See also GS 287, BG 88, GM 118-119.

The ascetic ideal has a *goal*-- and this goal is sufficiently universal for all other interests of human existence to seem narrow and petty in comparison; it relentlessly interprets periods, peoples, men in terms of this goal, it allows no other interpretation, no other goal, [...] it subordinates itself to no other power, it believes rather in its prerogative over all other powers, in its absolute *seniority of rank* with respect to all other powers-- it believes that no power can exist on earth without first having had conferred upon it a meaning, a right to existence, a value as an instrument in the service of *its* work, as a path and means to *its* goal, to *its* single goal...<sup>264</sup>

Nietzsche concluded that this "morality of unselfing" is an atrocity against nature which must be extirpated at all costs.<sup>265</sup> In light of these developments, Nietzsche lamented, "The declining instincts have become master over the ascending instincts-- The will to nothingness has now become master over the will to life!"<sup>266</sup>

The priests' legacy both haunted and inspired Nietzsche by unequivocally demonstrating that actual power can be overcome by something even greater-- the desire for unpossessed power. Hence, he could not help but grudgingly admire the 'morality manoeuvre', which had led to the banishment of his beloved aristocratic ideal and pervaded nineteenth-century Europe with the mediocrity of Christendom.<sup>267</sup> "In comparison with the ingenuity of priestly revenge, all other intelligence scarcely merits consideration. Human history would be a much too stupid affair were it not for the intelligence introduced by the powerless."<sup>268</sup> In addition to highlighting the value of revaluation and the danger of desire, religion had assisted the aristocracy by instilling self-discipline, honour, and the ability to keep promises into them-- the better to rule-- and by cultivating a more compliant 'herd' of humanity-- the better to be ruled.<sup>269</sup> With

<sup>264</sup> GM 123-124. When an instinct "seeks not to master some isolated aspect of life but rather life itself, its deepest, strongest, most fundamental conditions", then it must be opposed. [GM 97]

<sup>265</sup> EH 67.

<sup>266</sup> WP 217 [1888].

<sup>267</sup> For faith as a substitute for will, see GS 289. For faith as an excuse for not thinking, see WP 248 [1888], and EH 21: "God is a crude answer, a piece of indelicacy against us thinkers-- fundamentally even a crude *prohibition* to us: you shall not think!"

<sup>268</sup> GM 19. Ironically, the latter statement smacks of inadvertent self-revelation. Nietzsche's relation to the church was not simple rejection. He obviously recognized that the church had historically been a gymnasium for gentry to exercise power and practice their insouciance of superabundance. Sadly, Luther-- a man devoid of "instinct for power"-- mistook as corruption "that *luxury* of skepticism and tolerance which every triumphant, self-assured power permits itself." [GS 311]

<sup>269</sup> The benefits to the nobility are paramount to "the *sovereign individual*, the individual who resembles no one but himself, who has once again broken away from the morality of custom, the autonomous supramoral

Machiavellian optimism, even the ascetic ideal can be useful in purifying the will to power, protecting society from nihilistic despair, pooling the societal reservoir of available physical and spiritual resources, and thus preparing the way for a self-mastery which would be exemplified by the *Übermensch*.<sup>270</sup>

### 3. The Hope of the Future: Rise of the *Übermensch*:

Across his survey of human history, Nietzsche had observed a miasma of mediocrity. Through this spiritual smog, however, the towering figures of great men rose mountainous above the tumult, forming "a kind of bridge across the turbulent stream of becoming."<sup>271</sup> These giants transcended their forebears, participating in an "exalted spirit-dialogue" with their equals, "undisturbed by the excited chattering dwarfs who creep about beneath them".<sup>272</sup> This great "chain" of human exemplars served to unite the species and supply "the fundamental idea of faith in humanity".<sup>273</sup> Despite the travesty of the domination of "the lower species," who had all but eradicated the "higher species [...], i.e., those whose inexhaustible fertility and power keep up the faith in man",<sup>274</sup> Nietzsche conceived of a being who was-- along Anselmian lines-- simply too good not to be real:

Conversely, one could conceive of such a pleasure and power of self-determination, such a *freedom* of the will that the spirit would take leave of all faith and every wish for certainty, being practiced in maintaining himself on insubstantial ropes and possibilities and dancing even near abysses. Such a spirit would be the *free spirit* par excellence.<sup>275</sup>

A concept of 'spiritual evolution' provided a metaphorical means of linking the erratic yet spectacular specimens of the past-- like Caesar and Napoleon-- to a future which

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individual (since 'autonomous' and 'moral' are mutually exclusive)-- in short, the man with his own independent, enduring will, the man who is *entitled to make promises*." [GM 41]

<sup>270</sup> GM 105-106, 136; WP 9-10 [1886-1887].

<sup>271</sup> UM 111. Nietzsche employed similar images of an archipelago of greatness in describing Wagner's growing 'chain' of great operatic characters. [UM 202]

<sup>272</sup> UM 111.

<sup>273</sup> UM 68.

<sup>274</sup> WP 19 [1887].

<sup>275</sup> GS 289-290. Hollingdale argues that this is, in part, how Nietzsche personally resisted the will to nihilism. [Z 25] Nietzsche's portrayal of the *Übermensch* was strongly informed by his awe of the artistic supremacy of "Wagner's overflowing nature". [UM 223]

overshadowed the present mediocrity which Nietzsche despised.<sup>276</sup> Though it would be a gross inaccuracy to accuse Nietzsche of seeking to return to a 'Golden Age', despite his constant urge to 'press ahead', there is no shortage of nostalgia and sentiment when he gazes at the past.<sup>277</sup> Hence, Houlgate writes: "Nietzsche does not wish to bring about the resurrection of the 'blond beast', but the sublimation of him",<sup>278</sup> to which Strong adds, "[W]hat men have learned in slave morality must not be rejected, but rather transfigured."<sup>279</sup> As Tanner rightly points out, Nietzsche attempts to combine the 'incurable health' of the rather 'simplistic' master [*Herr*] with the cleverness and complexity of the slave [*Sklave*].<sup>280</sup> However, it would be an overstatement to reduce Nietzsche's vision of humanity to a message of interior self-overcoming for a general audience. Hence, the German philosopher delightfully embraced Brandes' description: "The expression 'aristocratic radicalism', which you employ, is very good. It is, permit me

<sup>276</sup> WP 471 [1887,1888]: "[I]t is perhaps part of the economy of human evolution that man should evolve piece by piece."

<sup>277</sup> Tanner *Nietzsche* 46. However, Ansell-Pearson states: "Nietzsche's aristocratism seeks to revive an older conception of politics, one which he locates in the Greek *agon* [...]" [33-34] White contends that Nietzsche is attempting "to inspire us with an urgent longing for 'the Master's return'." [685] He continues: "It follows that 'the return of the Master' corresponds to the overcoming of nihilism, with the destruction of the Priest in history, and the Slave within ourselves." [White 693] However, this would bring the conflict to an end, something untenable for Nietzsche. Rather, he would seek to instigate struggle with stronger and more challenging opponents, having no time for an 'eschatological' state of perpetual Sabbath peace. Ansell-Pearson identifies Nietzsche's failure to provide legitimization for his political theory as a 'fatal flaw' which, thus, perpetuates class conflict between the aristocracy and the lower classes. [41] Habermas blames this on the logical fallacy of his dismissal of reason, without which he cannot "legitimate the criteria of aesthetic judgment that he holds on to" [96] In light of Nietzsche's optimism in the constructive output of conflict, I'm not sure it constitutes, from Nietzsche's view, either an oversight or a flaw. For Kaufmann's existentialist yet erroneously egalitarian reading, see *Nietzsche* 297: "Nietzsche's own ethic is beyond both master and slave morality. He would like us to conform to neither and become *autonomous*." Nehamas rightly remarks that the choice of the title "Beyond Good and Evil" reflects Nietzsche's aristocratic sympathies. [206]

<sup>278</sup> Houlgate *Hegel* 13. Kain rejects the "obvious" conclusion that, "the *Übermensch* develops out of, or on the model of the master, not the slave." [123] However, Kain downplays the invective which Nietzsche directed towards the slaves and their mediocre values. Furthermore, the priests who engineer the revolt are actually a splinter from the master class. [GM 17] Richardson is right to point out that an important distinguishing trait is that the masters form a coherent group or caste, while the *Übermensch* is a rare and solitary species. [54] I would disagree with the schematic tidiness-- and overtly Hegelian nature-- of Richardson's formulation of "a sort of dialectical progression from master to slave to overman." [68] The *Übermensch*'s arrival seems far more random and accidental than Nietzsche would like.

<sup>279</sup> Strong 258.

<sup>280</sup> Tanner *Nietzsche* 71. See also Richardson 68. Detwiler observes a marked absence of aristocratic politics and "more sympathetic" treatment of democracy during Nietzsche's 'middle period' [16] Tanner argues that Nietzsche "gave up on the *Übermensch*, turning increasingly to Goethe as a model for the 'higher man'." [*Nietzsche* 79] I would suggest that Goethe's influence on the *Übermensch* [e.g., as autonomous artist and self-creator, well-spring of joyous trust, etc.], has been evident from the very beginning and, thus, does not support an abandonment of one for the other.



to say, the cleverest thing I have yet to read about myself."<sup>281</sup> As Detwiler insightfully observes,

His radicalism flows from his ability to embrace Romanticism's aesthetic revolt against the optimism and the rationalism of the Enlightenment while championing the uncompromising intellectual conscience that arose out of the Enlightenment but that in his view leads to the death of God and the advent of Western nihilism.<sup>282</sup>

To escape from this world of plebeian pettiness, Nietzsche strove to captivate the imagination with an artistic model for emulation,<sup>283</sup> a new image of human destiny, "a higher type that arises and preserves itself under different conditions from those of the average man."<sup>284</sup> Although Zarathustra stated that such a being has yet to appear in human history,<sup>285</sup> Nietzsche placed his hope in the utter unpredictability of the natural universe in producing 'exceptions':

One does not reckon with such beings, they arrive like fate, without motive, reason, consideration, pretext, they arrive like lightning, too fearful, too sudden, too convincing, too 'different', even to be hated. Their work is an instinctive creation and impression of form, they are the most involuntary, most unconscious artists there are-- wherever they appear, something new quickly grows up, a *living* structure of domination, in which parts and functions are demarcated and articulated, where only that which has first been given a 'meaning' with respect to the whole finds a place.<sup>286</sup>

True to Machiavellian form, Nietzsche viewed entire civilizations, races, classes, and religions as useful means to this supreme end-- the emergence of the superspecies. In a notebook entry, he once summarized his philosophical project as follows:

My ideas do not revolve around the degree of *power* that is granted to the one or to the other or to all, but around the degree of *power* that the one or the other should exercise over others or over all, and to what extent a sacrifice of freedom,

<sup>281</sup> Brandes 3. This was written on December 2, 1887.

<sup>282</sup> Detwiler 190.

<sup>283</sup> Golomb "Nietzsche" 255. See Irwin's rich suggestion that Nietzsche's treatment of human history parallels the Renaissance artists' use of Hellenistic culture, "drawing inspiration from the Greeks, but also allowing themselves enough freedom and forgetting to produce truly great and original art." [42-43] Nehamas portrays the *Übermensch* as an ideal literary character, "a framework within which many particular lives, each one of which exhibits the unity and coherence he finds so important, can fit." [167] Burkitt's notion of the *Übermensch* as "violent fantasy" is a bit overstated. [62]

<sup>284</sup> WP 463 [1887-1888].

<sup>285</sup> Z 117. Hence, the nobility had to content themselves with their roles as 'forerunners': "But you could surely create the Superman. Perhaps not you yourselves, my brothers! But you could transform yourselves into forefathers and ancestors of the Superman: and let this be your finest creating!" [Z 110]

<sup>286</sup> GM 66-67.



even enslavement, provides the basis for the emergence of a *higher type*. Put in the crudest form: *how could one sacrifice the development of mankind to help a higher species than man to come into existence?*<sup>287</sup>

All of the dejection, human stupidity, and suffering in existence can be endured, even justified, if they are swept under a higher cause. Hence, when speaking of the 'man of science', Nietzsche stated:

The objective man is an instrument, a precious, easily damaged and tarnished measuring instrument and reflecting apparatus which ought to be respected and taken good care of; but he is not an end, a termination and ascent, a complementary man in whom the *rest* of existence is justified, a conclusion-- and even less a beginning, a begetting and first cause, something solid, powerful and based firmly on itself that wants to be master: but rather only a delicate, *empty*, elegant, flexible mould which has first to wait for some content so as 'to form' itself by it [...]<sup>288</sup>

This 'termination and ascent' was the *Übermensch*: the 'superman' or 'overman' which, Kaufmann contends, was inspired by the concept of the 'over-soul' from an essay by Ralph Waldo Emerson.<sup>289</sup> Safranski identifies Nietzsche's first usage of the term when he was a teenager, describing Byron's "Manfred" as an "*Übermensch* who commands the spirits".<sup>290</sup> "*I teach you the Superman*," a post-transfigurational Zarathustra announced: "Man is something that should be overcome. What have you done to overcome him?"<sup>291</sup> At the same time, however, Nietzsche specified that the *Übermensch* is dependent upon the human herd, who comprise the very 'power generators' from which the super-individuals 'spike', as long as society is not inhibited by metaphysical 'surge protectors':

Great men, like great epochs are explosive materials in whom tremendous energy has been accumulated; their prerequisite has always been, historically and physiologically, that a protracted assembling, accumulating, economizing and preserving has preceded them-- that there has been no explosion for a long time.

<sup>287</sup> WP 458 [1883-1888]. See also WP 464 [1887-1888]. Salomé argues that, in Nietzsche's understanding, "'victory' equals self-destruction of mankind to make possible the creation of a superior mankind". [19]

<sup>288</sup> BG 135. See also Z 44: "What is great in man is that he is a bridge and not a goal; what can be loved in man is that he is a *going-across* and not a *going-down*."

<sup>289</sup> GS 11. Brandes contends that Nietzsche's vision was strongly influenced by Renan's *Dialogues Philosophiques*, [36] while Kaufmann highlights parallels with Aristotelian "greatness of soul". [Nietzsche 382-384] Kaufmann dates the word back to second century C.E. usage by Lucian, and lists occurrences in Heinrich Müller, J. G. Herder, Jean Paul, and Goethe. [Nietzsche 307-308] Another influential usage comes from Goethe's Mephistopheles: "You prayed with might, with depth that has controlled me, And here I am!-- What horror now can chase/ The colour from your lips, my superman?" [Goethe I 47]

<sup>290</sup> Safranski 35.

<sup>291</sup> Z 41.

If the tension in the mass has grown too great the merest accidental stimulus suffices to call the 'genius', the 'deed', the great destiny, into the world.<sup>292</sup>

Like the idealized nobleman, the *Übermensch* radiates cool indifference from a glacial core of invulnerable superabundance after having defeated his strongest foes: "What is best about a great victory is that it liberates the victor from the fear of defeat. 'Why not be defeated some time, too?' he says to himself; 'Now I am rich enough for that.'"<sup>293</sup> The *Übermensch* will remain impervious to opposing forces, whether external or internal, and will thereby epitomize true freedom.<sup>294</sup> Unlike the self-negation of Christianity, the *Übermensch*'s self-conquering will be merely a means to higher feats of mastery.<sup>295</sup> He will implement new values and revaluations while simultaneously

<sup>292</sup> TI 108. The mechanics of Nietzsche's master-slave dialectic appear far more insidious than that of Hegel, since proponents of Hegel-- unlike Nietzsche-- may argue that his dialectic is descriptive, not prescriptive. See Norman 50, Rice 367, Lynch 43. Nietzsche's necessitation of slavery is fairly unequivocal, given his response to contemporary labour issues-- "[I]f one needs slaves, one is a fool if one educates them to be masters." [TI 106]-- and the treatment of women-- "as if slavery were a counter-argument and not rather a condition of every higher culture, of every enhancement of culture". [BG 168] However, the eschatological actualization of Hegel's thought-- the extinction of all particularity-- may be far more deleterious in the long run. As Houlgate notes, the Nietzschean slave at least preserves his particularity by never abandoning the desire to reassert power over the master, whether by value inversions or by other means. [Hegel 130-131]

<sup>293</sup> GS 199. For the endorsement of 'stoic' heroics, see also WP 490 [1887-1888].

<sup>294</sup> TI 104: "How is freedom measured, in individuals as in nations? By the resistance which has to be overcome, by the effort it costs to stay aloft. One would have to seek the highest type of free man where the greatest resistance is constantly being overcome: five steps from tyranny, near the threshold of the danger of servitude. This is true psychologically when one understands by 'tyrants' pitiless and dreadful instincts, to combat which demands the maximum of authority and discipline towards oneself-- finest type Julius Caesar [...]" Nietzsche's vision of autonomy bears a strong resemblance to Hegel's description of the 'two modes of consciousness': "The one is independent whose essential nature is to be for itself, the other is dependent whose essence is life or existence for another. The former is the Master, or Lord, the latter the Bondsman." [Hegel I 182]

<sup>295</sup> NR 233. I disagree with commentators like Kain who attempt to argue for a 'kinder, gentler *Übermensch*', who thereby becomes a paragon of 'self-repression, sublimation and self-overcoming'. [134] See also Kaufmann *Nietzsche* 309-310, Hollingdale *Nietzsche* 97-99, Golomb and Wistrich 8. Such theorizing hinges, in part, upon a false dichotomy between 'private' and 'political'; hence, Hollingdale insists: "[T]he consequences following from the theory of will to power are, in fact, not social at all, [...] they are concerned with what takes place within a single 'soul'." [Nietzsche 95] It is evident even from the example Kain cites as "the best example of the *Übermensch*", King Vishvamitra, that such 'internalized power' is not confined to a mythical 'private realm' but achieves external expression in building "a new heaven, that is, a new religion, a new religion, new meaning and values." [135] Nietzsche himself was aware of the subtle elision between public and private, as reflected in an 1876 statement: "Cruelty is often a sign of troubled inner disposition that yearns for repose, as well as a certain cruel relentlessness of thought [...]" [Safranski 157] He also recognized this in his genealogical analysis of how the self-imposed cruelty of the priests manifested itself in an overtly external ethical onslaught against master morality. Furthermore, Nietzsche may be accused of many things, but political quietism isn't one of them-- hence, his rhetorical attacks on Bismarck's 'grand politics' and the rights of women. The *Übermensch*, like Zarathustra, is not destined to stay in his 'cave'. Kain goes on to acknowledge that the carte blanche 'poetic license' which the *Übermensch* receives, combined with Nietzsche's silence on specified exercises of that power is, indeed,

inspiring them. Contrary to fascist appropriations of Nietzsche's writings, one scholar rightly emphasizes: "The epitome of Nietzschean strength and self-expression is thus not to be conceived as the crude, material manifestation of physical or political power, but rather as an internalized, spiritualised (*vergeistigt*) form of aesthetic wholeness and creativity."<sup>296</sup> Moreover, this ultra-human could soar over the darkest abysses like a bird, tear through human values faster than a speeding bullet, boldly go into the vast realms of undiscovered human experience, resisting the black holes of nihilism, probing the nebulae of 'evil', and emerging victorious, cold and distant as a god, torn and bloodied as only a

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foreboding. [135] He writes, "The only kind of power Nietzsche is after, the sort of power the *Übermensch* must have, is the power to create meaning-- a new heaven, a new vision, new cultural values." [Kain 143] It is one thing to extol the 'creation of new values', but whose meaning and for whom do they apply? Though Schacht argues that Nietzsche envisioned "an *ordering transformation*, which under different circumstances takes such different forms as subjugation, regulation, structural articulation and fixation, and the functional integration and harmonization of constellations of forces", [228] this would be little consolation for those who were powerless to resist their 'harmonization'. For a longer rebuttal of attempts to minimize the 'domination of others' theme in Nietzsche, see Detwiler 157-162.

<sup>296</sup> Houlgate *Hegel* 74. Houlgate later states: "Nietzsche's celebration of heroic, cavalier, creative self-affirmation is not mindless or brutish, but [...] includes--and is deepened by-- his appreciation of the value of more mild, other-regarding virtues such as gentleness, responsiveness, and magnanimity." [ "Power" 132] I concur with Ansell-Pearson in dismissing J. P. Stern's assertion that Hitler was the closest embodiment of Nietzsche's anthropological ideal. [Ansell-Pearson 33] This does not, however, distance Nietzsche entirely from the fascist politics which commandeered his thoughts. As Detwiler observes, "Nietzsche's artistic vision carries with it a willingness to aestheticize politics in ways that suggest distinct affinities with fascism." [113] See also Gemes 356: "While Nietzsche scholars may believe that his many positive accounts of mixtures, his continual disparagement of German nationalism, and his many positive comments about Jews exonerate him from responsibility [...] I think those who take seriously Nietzsche's dictum that a thing is the sum of its effects and understand how destructive the biologicistic rhetoric of degeneration has been for Europe will find little solace here." Though Nietzsche opposed a tyrannical nation-state, brute force, and military coercion, his derision of Christian mediocrity, cultural lassitude, liberal ethics, and the wide-ranging and politically portentous creative liberties which he ascribed to the *Übermensch*-- "in Nietzsche's hands the question of annihilation becomes an artist's question" [Detwiler 109]-- suggest that Nietzsche clearly endorsed power over others, albeit a less-than-physical one. Many would argue that "a very indirect domination"-- [Daybreak #113, cited in Hollingdale *Nietzsche* 84] whether it be aesthetic, spiritual, or emotional-- would be far more insidious on account of its cloaked nature. For Kaufmann's clarification of Nietzsche's use of 'war' imagery, see *Nietzsche* 386-389. Hollingdale attributes this 'unfortunate' choice of terminology to his naiveté in failing to "appreciate the depth of sordidness to which Europe would descend." [*Nietzsche* 6] Nietzsche was clearly no fascist; however, to argue for the 'metaphorical' status of his choice of terms does little to obviate his bellicose attitudes towards perceived agents of 'weakness'. See, for example, TI 128: "The weak and ill-constituted shall perish: first principle of our philanthropy. And one shall help them to do so." Ansell-Pearson concludes: "Given that the aim is to produce greatness by rendering the majority, in Nietzsche's own words, 'incomplete human beings', it is difficult to see how Nietzsche's aristocrats could maintain their rule without recourse to highly oppressive instruments of political control and manipulation." [154-155] For a fascinating collection of essays by Nietzsche scholars and historians on the relations of Nietzsche and fascism, see *Nietzsche, Godfather of Fascism? On the Uses and Abuses of a Philosophy*, ed. Jacob Golomb and Robert S. Wistrich. The editors conclude: "While almost any philosophy can be propagandistically abused (as Hans Sluga has shown, Kant was a particular favourite among academic philosophers of the Third Reich!), Nietzsche's pathos, his imaginative excesses as well as his image as a prophet-seer and creator of myths, seems especially conducive



man can be, bleeding immortality:

Another ideal runs ahead of us, a strange, tempting, dangerous ideal [...] of a spirit who plays naively-- that is, not deliberately but from overflowing power and abundance-- with all that was hitherto called holy, good, untouchable, divine; for whom those supreme things that people naturally accept as their value standards, signify danger, decay, debasement, or at least recreation, blindness, and temporary self-oblivion; the ideal of a human, superhuman well-being and benevolence that will often appear *inhuman*-- for example, when it confronts all earthly seriousness so far, all solemnity in gesture, word, tone, eye, morality, and task so far, as if it were their most incarnate and involuntary parody-- and in spite of all of this, it is perhaps only with him that *great seriousness* really begins, that the real question mark is posed for the first time, that the destiny of the soul changes, the hand moves forward, the tragedy *begins*.<sup>297</sup>

The deliberate elision of the human and the divine lies at the heart of Nietzsche's vision, the energy of heaven flung in playful, childlike fury upon the earth.<sup>298</sup> For the German philosopher, the heavens were empty because the earth was full. Hence, he wrote,

It is richness in personality, abundance in oneself, overflowing and bestowing, instinctive good health and affirmation of oneself, that produce great sacrifice and great love: it is strong and godlike selfhood from which these affects grow, just as surely as do the desire to become master, encroachment, the inner certainty of having a right to everything.<sup>299</sup>

However, unlike the universal message of Christianity or the egalitarian auspices of liberal and utilitarian ethics,<sup>300</sup> the promulgation of a "dangerous knowledge"<sup>301</sup> which reveals the 'true' meaning of appearances-- religious and otherwise-- to a select elite of readers<sup>302</sup> and is shrouded from the vast majority of people suggests that Nietzsche's philosophical

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to such abuse by fascists." [Golomb and Wistrich 4]

<sup>297</sup> GS 347. Tanner attributes the fact that Nietzsche failed to spell out any particular courses of action for the *Übermensch* to its 'idealistic' nature which is "so-far removed from the squalidly real". [51] White persuasively argues that Nietzsche must leave his account open-ended since this ultimate autonomy must, by definition, "exceed all conceptual determinations". [694]

<sup>298</sup> Zarathustra thus styled himself "a prophet of the lightning [...] called *Superman*." [Z 45] Hollingdale argues, "The superman is not man's successor but rather God's." [Nietzsche 98] See also Richardson 66 n. 103.

<sup>299</sup> WP 209 [1887].

<sup>300</sup> See Ansell-Pearson 55: "Nietzsche's anti-humanist political thinking does not give equal value to every individual human life, but assesses the value of an individual life in terms of whether it represents an ascending or descending mode of life [...] If individuals cannot attain greatness, they should at least serve it. This is the essence of Nietzsche's aristocratism, as well as the principle on which he bases his unorthodox, illiberal, and anti-Christian notion of justice." See also Detwiler 113.

<sup>301</sup> BG 53.

<sup>302</sup> BG 61, Z 299, EH 24.

project was closely modeled after the Greek Mystery religions.<sup>303</sup> For Nietzsche, individualism clearly isn't for everyone.<sup>304</sup>

In conclusion, it is difficult to overestimate the sheer existential worth which this ideal injected into life for Nietzsche. As Zarathustra proudly proclaimed, "The Superman is the meaning of the earth. Let your will say: The Superman *shall be* the meaning of the earth!"<sup>305</sup> The *Übermensch* became a mote of meaning in the swirling vortex of eternal recurrence, redeeming his vision from eternal redundancy: "I do not want life *again*. How did I endure it? Creating. What makes me stand the sight of it? The vision of the overman who *affirms* life. I have tried to affirm it *myself*-- alas!"<sup>306</sup> Hence, the *Übermensch* constitutes both motivational exemplar as well as "biological product of deliberate breeding",<sup>307</sup> satisfying Nietzsche's penchant for the heroic: "Heroism is the cast of mind of a person who strives toward a goal which regards him with utter indifference. Heroism is the well-intentioned will toward self-destruction."<sup>308</sup> Like an alpine lake, humankind needs to be eternally dammed in order to be deepened, or so Nietzsche dared to dream: "[P]erhaps man will rise ever higher as soon as he ceases to *flow out* into a god".<sup>309</sup> To this end, Nietzsche laboured vigorously. In light of his vision of the past, present, and future of humankind, the next chapter will examine more closely Nietzsche's specific validations of power 'properly exercised'.

<sup>303</sup> See Barfield 99: "[T]hey revealed in some way the inner meaning of external appearances, and secondly, that the 'initiate' attained immortality in a sense different from that of the uninitiated."

<sup>304</sup> See Detwiler 105: "Nietzsche champions the individualism of the highest type but not that of all man."

<sup>305</sup> Z 42.

<sup>306</sup> GS 19. Salomé insightfully observes that the *Übermensch* is 'an intensely personal and stylized man', dubbing him an "*Über-Nietzsche*". [139]

<sup>307</sup> Safranski 271. In keeping with Nietzsche's rejection of body/ soul dichotomies, Kaufmann observes that, "'breeding' is at least as spiritual as it is physical." [Nietzsche 326] For this reason, I disagree with Golomb's statement: "Nietzsche valued the psychic and the spiritual more highly than the physical and the biological." [Golomb "De-Nazify" 21] For *Zucht* and *Züchtung* as 'discipline, breeding, or cultivation', see Kaufmann Nietzsche 304. While commentators such as Kaufmann and Hollingdale argue that the warrior motif was supplanted by the 'new philosopher' in Nietzsche's mature thought, Zeitlin argues that, "the fact that Nietzsche's examples of 'higher types' are so often individuals like Alcibiades, Julius Caesar, Cesare Borgia, and Napoleon, raises serious doubts whether he merely had philosophers in mind." [15] A crucial hermeneutical factor lies in whether one believes that Nietzsche conflated the role of philosopher with the *Übermensch*, or whether one argues that, despite obvious overlap in function, the coveted 'new philosopher' remains a distinct yet crucial role which prepares the way for the coming *Übermensch*. Because Nietzsche never identified himself as an *Übermensch*, I favour the latter interpretation.

<sup>308</sup> From an August 1882 note to Salomé. [Salomé 19]

<sup>309</sup> GS 230.



### Chapter 3: Appropriating Power: Nietzsche's Concept of Power:

#### III. Tier of Authority: Valid Exertions of Power:

After embarking upon a brief survey into the secondary literature, the contention of Keith Ansell-Pearson appears somewhat as an understatement: "Inquiry into the political dimension of Nietzsche's thought still remains the most contentious and controversial aspect of Nietzsche studies."<sup>310</sup> Peter Bergmann observes that, whereas "his accusers have placed him outside his time" by deeming him 'unpolitical', "his defenders have placed him above his time" by regarding him as 'antipolitical'.<sup>311</sup> It is highly significant that Nietzsche did not articulate key roles for particular positions in society. Because he was preoccupied with humankind as a species and not individuals *per se*, he refrained from providing tangible measures for societal reconfiguration. The masters must merely be allowed to rule as masters, coordinating new monuments to moral craftiness and ingenuity. The slaves must continue to serve as slaves, comprising the stable 'easel' upon which the master-pieces will be displayed. And all must be subject to the 'aesthetic' authority of the *Übermensch*, whenever one should alight upon the stage of human history. Nietzsche did, however, emphasize certain exemplary enactments of the will to power, most of which were strongly informed by his own life. In a notebook entry describing "him that has turned out well", Nietzsche declared:

He enjoys the taste of what is wholesome for him; his pleasure in anything ceases when the bounds of the wholesome are crossed; he divines the remedies for partial injuries; he has illnesses as stimulants of his life; he knows how to exploit ill chances; he grows stronger through the accidents that threaten to destroy him; he instinctively gathers from all that he sees, hears, experiences, what advances his main concern-- he follows a principle of selection-- he allows much to fall through; he reacts with the slowness bred by a long caution and a deliberate pride -- he tests a stimulus for its origins and its intentions, he does not submit; he is always in his *own company*, whether he deals with books, men, or landscapes; he honors by choosing, by admitting, by trusting.<sup>312</sup>

This highlights a central, pivotal, overarching authority, who oversees slave, master, even the *Übermensch*-- the philosopher himself, who acts as grand overseer of the species, noble

<sup>310</sup> Ansell-Pearson 2. For a brief overview, see Detwiler 1, 200 n. 13.

<sup>311</sup> Bergmann 2.

“architect of the future”,<sup>313</sup> Plato’s ‘philosopher-king’ who rules from an invisible throne.

Under the rather unassuming subtitle, “Why I am a Destiny”, Nietzsche once predicted:

I know my fate. One day there will be associated with my name the recollection of something frightful-- of a crisis like no other before on earth, of the profoundest collision of conscience, of a decision evoked *against* everything that until then had been believed in, demanded, sanctified. I am not a man, I am dynamite.<sup>314</sup>

He regarded the unleashing of epistemological ‘Armageddon’ under the same rubric as any other human act-- whether cunningly heinous or seemingly altruistic, all human activities are exclusively amoral designs for furthering personal power:

Benefiting and hurting others are ways of exercising one’s power over others; this is all one desires in such cases. One hurts those whom one wants to feel one’s power, for pain is a much more efficient means to that end than pleasure [...]. We benefit and show benevolence to those who are already dependent on us in some way (which means that they are used to thinking of us as causes); we want to increase their power because in that way we increase ours, or we want to show them how advantageous it is to be in our power; that way they will become more satisfied with their condition and more hostile to and willing to fight against the enemies of *our* power.<sup>315</sup>

According to Nietzsche, even historically disempowered people can regain power through ‘hypocritical and shrewd’ avenues such as obedience, submission, fatalism, ‘objectivity’, self-tyranny, criticizing the authorities, and existential detachment.<sup>316</sup>

Despite the apparent amorality of all human action, there were at least two manifestations of power which Nietzsche utterly abhorred. The first is any thought or action which transgresses the ‘natural’ categories of class, race, and ‘blood’ and blurs all gradations of distinction into one dispiriting herd. The second is any thought or action which obstructs the ongoing evolution of the species by miring it within the ‘stasis-quo’ of

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<sup>312</sup> WP 520 [1888].

<sup>313</sup> UM 94.

<sup>314</sup> EH 96.

<sup>315</sup> GS 86. For ‘pity’ as a sign of contempt, see NR 155, GS 176. One of Kierkegaard’s meditations seems hauntingly apt: “Of all suffering none is perhaps so great as to be marked out as the object of compassion, none with tempts man so strongly to rebel against God.” [JK 125 (1847)]

<sup>316</sup> WP 384 [1887].

'being', antiquated conventionality, and/ or religious domestication. To 'freeze' such valuable assets-- human and otherwise-- can scarcely be tolerated within a closed universe where former values and truths must be slain for new ones to take their place in the epistemological 'food chain'.<sup>317</sup> No metaphysical or religious truths can be privileged in this god-eat-god world in which mastery of the other is the primary, inescapable goal and means of life.<sup>318</sup> Hence, Nietzsche announced,

[We] are delighted with all who love, as we do, danger, war, and adventures, who refuse to compromise, to be captured, reconciled and castrated; we count ourselves among conquerors; we think about the necessity for new orders, also for a new slavery-- for every new strengthening and enhancement for the human type also involves a new kind of enslavement.<sup>319</sup>

Zarathustra thus commanded that peace should be esteemed "as a means to new wars. And the short peace more than the long."<sup>320</sup>

With his stylistic aloofness from contextualized particulars, Nietzsche endorsed no specific political models-- whether monarchy, oligarchy, etc. Instead, he cited Machiavelli's claim that, "the form of governments is of very slight importance, although semi-educated people think otherwise. The great goal of politics should be *permanence*, which outweighs anything else, being much more valuable than freedom." He then added: "Only when permanence is securely established and guaranteed is there any possibility of constant development and ennobling inoculation, which, to be sure, will usually be opposed by the dangerous companion of all permanence: authority."<sup>321</sup>

With no small disdain, he once declared that the state had usurped the role formerly occupied by the medieval church:

In the hands of despots and money-makers, the state certainly makes an attempt to organize everything anew out of itself and to bind and constrain all those mutually hostile forces: that is to say, it wants men to render it the same idolatry they formerly rendered the church.<sup>322</sup>

<sup>317</sup> In keeping with his predilection for biological imagery, Nietzsche once compared the spirit to a "stomach", amorally ingesting whatever agreed with it and disgorging the rest. [BG 161]

<sup>318</sup> WP 193 [1888]: "[W]hat good is it to hold with all one's strength that war is evil, not to do harm, not to desire to negate! One wages war nonetheless! One cannot do otherwise!"

<sup>319</sup> GS 338. See also TI 31. On the virtue of slavery, see BG 112, where he described it as "the indispensable means also for spiritual discipline and breeding."

<sup>320</sup> Z 74. For the many types of peace, see TI 54.

<sup>321</sup> HA 139.

<sup>322</sup> UM 150.

On account of Nietzsche's faith in the constructive and positive role of conflict in 'natural' growth,<sup>323</sup> he generally sanctioned those actions which destabilized old 'orders' and re-established new and more powerful ones in their wake: "For wherever the great architecture of culture developed, it was its task to force opposing forces into harmony through an overwhelming aggregation of the remaining, less incompatible powers, yet without suppressing or shackling them."<sup>324</sup> Once again, it is important to emphasize that he did not glorify 'mindless' destruction or epistemological anarchy as an end in itself. The hammer strokes he directed at the hallowed edifices of civilization were aimed and delivered with 'science-like' precision as part of his overarching project of human amelioration. The vaunted higher-species to which humankind is being urged will not resort to brute force, but will rather personify the richness and gracefulness of a meticulously measured self-control. Hence, Zarathustra exclaimed,

To stand with relaxed muscles and unharnessed wills: that is the most difficult thing for all of you, you sublime men! When power grows gracious and descends into the visible: I call such descending beauty. And I desire beauty from no one as much as I desire it from you, you man of power: may your goodness be your ultimate self-overpowering.<sup>325</sup>

The genuine hero cannot define himself exclusively based on external conflict "under the impulse of a moment" but must personify the coldest potency under the sway of no occipital goals or mores, acting purely for its own inscrutable sake; for, Nietzsche believed:

Blind indulgence of an affect, regardless of whether it be a generous and compassionate or belligerent affect, is the cause of the greatest of evils. Greatness of character does not consist in not possessing these affects-- on the contrary, one possesses them to the highest degree-- but in having them under control. And even that without any pleasure in this restraint, but merely because--<sup>326</sup>

This chapter will examine six key strategies endorsed by Nietzsche in the

<sup>323</sup> See, for example, EH 17: "[E]very growth reveals itself in the seeking out of a powerful opponent-- or problem: for a philosopher who is warlike also challenges problems to a duel."

<sup>324</sup> HA 168. Nietzsche regarded socialism as 'despotic' since it desires a 'despotic' degree of executive power and seeks to destroy the individual by reducing him to "an expedient *organ of the community*." [HA 226]

<sup>325</sup> Z 141.

<sup>326</sup> WP 490 [1887-1888].



performance of his vital task of salvaging humankind from its current existential plight. These six dispensations of power contain at least one unifying factor-- the ratification and 'spiritualization' of adversity in light of Nietzsche's fundamental motto from "the military school of life"-- "What does not kill me makes me stronger."<sup>327</sup> He argued:

A new creation in particular, the new *Reich* for instance, has more need of enemies than friends: only in opposition does it feel itself necessary, only in opposition does it *become* necessary.... We adopt the same attitude towards the 'enemy within': there too we have spiritualized enmity, there too we have grasped its *value*. One is *fruitful* only at the cost of being rich in contradictions; one remains *young* only on condition the soul does not relax, does not long for peace [...]. one has renounced *grand* life when one renounces war....<sup>328</sup>

The major activities which comprise the exercise and expansion of power include the determination of new values, the destruction of antiquated mores, the embracing of suffering, the employment of cruelty, the aestheticizing of the world, and the breeding of the species.<sup>329</sup>

<sup>327</sup> TI 33.

<sup>328</sup> TI 54. Naturally, Nietzsche traced belligerence to the instincts: "All associations are good that make one practice the weapons of defense and offense that reside in one's instincts." [WP 486 (1888)] See also TI 103: "Freedom means that the manly instincts that delight in war and victory have gained mastery over the other instincts-- for example, over the instinct of happiness."

<sup>329</sup> This list is vulnerable to the criticism that I am playing Nietzsche as a philosophical 'heavy' by neglecting 'lighter' exercises such as celebration [BT xviii, Z 98-99], play, [GS 347, EH 37, 72, WP 419 (1885-86)] joy, [Z 111, 332, WP 62 (1887)] dancing, [GS 164, 289-290, Z 227, BG 110] and laughter, [GS 163-164, Z 68, GM 79] which he equally condoned as expressions of abundant strength. Such activities are omitted on account of space limitations and the parameters of this project, although they may be given a darker edge by Nietzsche himself-- e.g., "the eternal joy of becoming-- that joy which also encompasses *joy in destruction*...." [TI 121]-- and his commentators. See, for example, Babich 114: "For Nietzsche, the few are those individuals physically and spiritually constituted with power to face what is no ultimate vision of truth but only the emptiness behind the masks of culture, to see reality and to savour this raw reality in the moment purchased by laughter and delight, until, as it eternally recurs, the balance of life shudders and decays." Ansell-Pearson identifies in Nietzsche a lesser-known "politics of survival", which consists not of legislating new values and law-tables for men, but of playing in parodic and ironic fashion with the ideals of humanity", in addition to his "politics of cruelty". However, due to the fragmentary nature of his final writing, he argues that it is impossible to determine which politics Nietzsche favoured more and, thus, identifies the latter as "the only overt or explicit politics which it is possible to associate with him." [Ansell-Pearson 147] A further objection could be raised as to why I omit the predominant theme of 'self-mastery' from the list. My reasons are two-fold: first, the topic has been thoroughly covered by recent scholars attempting to divorce Nietzsche's concept of power from formulations of oppressive power over others, which I don't find convincing; second, I believe that, as important as self-discipline was to Nietzsche, it is merely a means for consolidation in order to exert one's influence upon externalities, and not an end in itself.



## A. The Task of Revaluation:

As several commentators have previously warned, it is frightfully easy to caricature Nietzsche's will to power as a maudlin endorsement of brute strength and overlook the subtle nuances of his thought.<sup>330</sup> In a notebook entry, Nietzsche identified the futility of unleashing brute force without a cognitive or hermeneutical accompaniment: "[W]hile a crude injury done him [an adversary] certainly demonstrates our power over him, it at the same time estranges his will from us even more-- and thus makes him less easy to subjugate."<sup>331</sup> Nietzsche harboured little optimism that something as ubiquitous and amorphous as the will to power could be encapsulated within a specific empire, nation, or political system. For this reason, the surging military might of the Prussian Empire under Otto von Bismarck elicited scant attention from the philosopher. He viewed such 'grand politics' as a prescription of "blood and iron" to combat German 'anaemic' taste, "a dangerous therapeutic which has certainly taught me how to wait but has not yet taught me how to hope".<sup>332</sup> Although the fickle crowds may worship at "another Tower of Babel, some monstrosity of empire and power", Nietzsche espoused "the old belief that it is the great idea alone which can bestow greatness on a deed or a cause."<sup>333</sup> The real struggle for supremacy took place on the battlefield of the mind. Invoking the symbolism of Christopher Columbus' brave forages beyond the horizons of Europe, Nietzsche exclaimed:

*Embark!-- Consider how every individual is affected by an overall philosophical justification of his way of living and thinking: he experiences it as a sun that shines especially for him and bestows warmth, blessings, and fertility on him; it makes him independent of praise and blame, self-sufficient, rich, liberal with happiness and good will; incessantly it re-fashions evil into good, leads all energies to bloom and ripen, and does not permit the petty weeds of grief and chagrin to come up at all. In the end one exclaims: How I wish that many such new suns were yet to be created! Those who are evil or unhappy and the*

<sup>330</sup> I also owe this timely exhortation to Dr. Leslie Stevenson following a paper delivered at St. Mary's College on October 23, 2002.

<sup>331</sup> WP 404 [1888].

<sup>332</sup> BG 187.

<sup>333</sup> BG 171. This is one reason why Nietzsche denigrated the false-triumphalism surrounding Germany's victory in the Franco-Prussian War of 1870-1871: the ensuing celebration of Germany's 'cultural superiority' and the stupor of smugness constituted "the power to extirpate the German spirit". [UM 4] Military supremacy clearly did not entail cultural supremacy. On Nietzsche's outrage over the subordination of culture to 'the state', see Safranski 70 and Bergmann 3.

exceptional human being-- all these should also have their philosophy, their good right, their sunshine! What is needful is not pity for them [...] what is needful is a new *justice*! And a new watchword. And new philosophers. The moral earth, too, is round. The moral earth, too, has its antipodes. The antipodes, too, have the right to exist. There is yet another world to be discovered-- and more than one. Embark, philosophers!<sup>334</sup>

The "ruling idea"<sup>335</sup> became central to Nietzsche's species-impacting project, entrusted to the apostolic zeal of fellow 'Columbaustian'<sup>336</sup> philosophers: "To prepare a *reversal of values* for a certain strong kind of man of the highest spirituality and strength of will and to this end slowly and cautiously to unfetter a host of instincts now kept in check and calumniated-- whoever reflects on this becomes one of us, the free spirits [...]"<sup>337</sup>

Because there are no transcendent or privileged 'truths',<sup>338</sup> Nietzsche regarded the creation of values as a more sophisticated mode of will to self-empowerment. Hence, he once exclaimed, "The great epochs of our life are the occasions when we gain the courage to rebaptize our evil qualities as our best qualities."<sup>339</sup> This sentiment lay at the heart of his summons for a new breed of philosophers, "spirits strong and original enough to make a start on antithetical evaluations and to revalue and reverse 'eternal values'."<sup>340</sup> However, Zarathustra's maxim, "Nothing is true, everything is permitted", was a privilege reserved only for these 'higher' types of men.<sup>341</sup> The German philosopher did not advocate a value-free world, but rather a world in which values are pragmatically subordinated to the expansion of personal power bases. Nietzsche's 'prince', like Machiavelli's, is characterized by a radical 'objectivity',

understood not as 'disinterested contemplation' (which is a non-concept and a nonsense), but as the capacity to have all the arguments for and against *at one's disposal* and to suspend or implement them at will: so that one can exploit that very *diversity* of perspectives and affective interpretations in the interest of knowledge.<sup>342</sup>

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<sup>334</sup> GS 231-232.

<sup>335</sup> UM 227.

<sup>336</sup> A combination of Columbus and Faust.

<sup>337</sup> WP 503 [1885].

<sup>338</sup> HA 45.

<sup>339</sup> BG 97.

<sup>340</sup> BG 126.

<sup>341</sup> Z 285.

The primary objective behind Nietzsche's strategy of revaluation is to enhance existential commitment to and aspirations for the material world in keeping with his monistic dismissal of the supernatural.<sup>343</sup> Hence, Zarathustra sought to repatriate those 'natural' instincts which embodied the universal drive towards building larger power units: sensual pleasure, the lust for power, and selfishness.<sup>344</sup> Such summarily dismissed 'sins' as "hatred, envy, covetousness, and lust for domination" were re-transcribed as healthy and natural, "life-conditioning" instead of life-effacing.<sup>345</sup> The greatest revolution of revaluation which Nietzsche initiated was the supplanting of 'truth for truth's sake' by 'truth for species' sake'.<sup>346</sup>

#### B. The Destruction of Antiquated Idols: Nietzsche's Qualified Nihilism:

Closely allied with the action of revaluation is the destruction of ideals and 'lies' which no longer serve to enhance and advance the human species. Such intellectual violence is neither immoral nor deplorable, but rather 'natural'. Hence, Nietzsche wrote:

[E]very past, however, is worthy to be condemned-- for that is the nature of human things: human violence and weakness have always played a mighty role in them. It is not justice which here sits in judgment; it is even less mercy which pronounces the verdict: it is life alone, that dark, driving power that insatiably thirsts for itself.<sup>347</sup>

In the life of every "high and select kind of man", there comes a time of violent breaching with custom: "[T]he young soul is devastated, torn loose, torn out-- it itself does not know what is happening. An urge, a pressure governs it, mastering the soul like a command: the will and wish awaken to go away, anywhere, at any cost [...]"<sup>348</sup> Nietzsche, however, offered no short-term relief for a soul spasmed by existential 'growth spurts': "The last thing *I* would promise would be to 'improve' mankind. I erect no new idols; let the old

<sup>342</sup> GM 98.

<sup>343</sup> Both Platonism and Christianity contributed to this abhorrent devaluation of the material world. [BG 32] Zarathustra acknowledged the danger of merely substituting one ahistorical being for another. Hence, he insisted, "My will clings to mankind, I bind myself to mankind with fetters, because I am drawn up to the Superman: for my other will wants to draw me up to the Superman." [Z 164]

<sup>344</sup> Z 206.

<sup>345</sup> BG 53.

<sup>346</sup> BG 35.

<sup>347</sup> UM 76.

<sup>348</sup> HA 6.

idols learn what it means to have legs of clay. *To overthrow idols* (my word for 'ideals')-- that rather is my business."<sup>349</sup>

It would be easy to dismiss this inevitable 'idol-smashing' as adolescent indulgence, the spiritual 'vandalism' of a teenager who has been allowed to live 'rent-free' too long in his parents' epistemological 'basement'. With an air of indulgent *Schadenfreude*, Nietzsche exclaimed, "I know joy in destruction-- in both I obey my Dionysian nature, which does not know how to separate No-doing from Yes-saying. I am the first *immoralist*: I am therewith the *destroyer par excellence*."<sup>350</sup> However, he contended that destruction is essential to the natural order of life: the old forms of truth must be shredded like a 'cocoon' in order for new metamorphoses to emerge:

[I]n hindsight, all *our* behavior and judgments will appear as inadequate and rash as the behavior and judgments of backward savage tribes now seem to us inadequate and rash. To understand all this can cause great pain, but afterwards there is consolation. These pains are birth pangs. The butterfly wants to break through his cocoon; he tears at it, he rends it: then he is blinded and confused by the unknown light, the realm of freedom. Men who are *capable* of that sorrow (how few they will be!) will make the first attempt to see if mankind *can transform itself* from a *moral* into a *wise* mankind.<sup>351</sup>

In response to accusations of existential immaturity, Nietzsche might have responded that his 'youthful' prodigy has taken an epistemological 'vow of poverty': "He is poor today, but not because one has taken everything away from him; he has thrown away everything. What is that to him? He is used to finding things. It is the poor who misunderstand his voluntary poverty."<sup>352</sup> From Nietzsche's perspective, a man must empty his hands in order to take hold of even greater prizes. Within a closed universe in which there is neither Creator nor creation *ex nihilo*, power is a limited resource which can only be culled or carved from existing power structures. Hence, he declared, "In order for a shrine to be set up, *another shrine must be broken into pieces*: that is the law."<sup>353</sup>

<sup>349</sup> EH 3-4. I take this as a sign of growing disillusionment that the race itself may be beyond improvement.

<sup>350</sup> EH 97.

<sup>351</sup> HA 75. In *Daybreak*, he wrote: "The snake which cannot shed its skin will perish. It is the same with minds which are prevented from changing their opinions: they cease to function as minds." [cited in Salomé 31]

<sup>352</sup> GS 204.

<sup>353</sup> GM 75. Gemes differentiates between postmodernism's apparent rejection of authority and Nietzsche's



Unsurprisingly, Christianity became the primary target of demolition on account of its hostility against 'natural' life, repression of the instincts, and the decaying, mediocrity-harboured façade of this once-formidable repository of moral and existential power which dominated Europe. Nietzsche was particularly incensed by its duplicitous pretence of unconditional love, which protected "an ecclesiastical order with priesthood, theology, cult, sacrament; in short, everything that Jesus of Nazareth had *combated*."<sup>354</sup> Nevertheless, such destruction has to be careful and selective, motivated by cold calculation rather than hatred and *résentiment*. Hence, it took an able philosopher to wield "an ecstatic nihilism" masterfully "as a mighty pressure and hammer with which he breaks and removes degenerate and decaying races to make way for a new order of life, or to implant into that which is degenerate and desires to die a longing for the end."<sup>355</sup> In fact, the hammer became an emblem for the form in which Nietzsche's philosophical activity was actualized-- the short, swift strokes of his sledge-like aphorisms, patiently chipping away at society's monolithic idols of 'truth'.<sup>356</sup>

Nietzsche carefully qualified the use of nihilism, which he defined as "the radical repudiation of value, meaning, and desirability", as a means and never an end in itself.<sup>357</sup> There were at least four reasons why he could not condone rampant nihilism. First, he recognized that 'idols' as such represent power sources which must be re-configured into more useful forms in the service of a 'ruling thought' rather than wantonly destroyed. Second, nihilism must have remained ideologically repulsive to him on a deeper level, since he regarded it as the logical outcome of Christianity's will to truth, which, having uncovered its own duplicity, lurches wildly from "'God is truth' to the fanatical faith 'All is

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rejection of certain types of authority while leaving room for "an immanent authority, an authority that comes within." [342] I am sceptical that the postmodernist theorists he is targeting have passed up such authority-- or even believe they have done so. As Nietzsche demonstrated, it takes authority to reject authority.

<sup>354</sup> WP 116 [1887-1888]. Nietzsche once quipped that this supreme historical irony could pass as evidence for the existence of "an ironical divinity". [TI 160] See also WP 97-98 [1888].

<sup>355</sup> WP 544 [1885].

<sup>356</sup> He was initially attracted to Sallust's epigrams, which were "[c]ompact, severe, with as much substance as possible". [TI 116] Aphorisms also formed a direct link between Nietzsche and the Classical/ Roman ideal, which he regarded as "*noble par excellence*".

<sup>357</sup> WP 7 [1886-1887].



false”.<sup>358</sup> Third, Nietzsche recognized an inherent lack of philosophical sophistication, and fundamental inconsistency within nihilism:

A nihilist is a man who judges of the world as it is that it ought *not* to be, and of the world as it ought to be that it does not exist. According to this view, our existence (action, suffering, willing, feeling) has no meaning: the pathos of ‘in vain’ is the nihilists’ pathos-- at the same time, as pathos, an inconsistency on the part of nihilists.<sup>359</sup>

His point is a cogent one: if the world is truly meaningless, then why should nihilists care? Finally, Nietzsche indiscriminately attacked any attempt to devalue the natural world, whether it be Christian, Buddhist, or nihilist. He insisted that man’s attitude towards existence must be characterized by a radical exuberance-- not the sour rejection, despair, and *r  s  ntiment* personified by many nihilistic tendencies.

### C. Embracing Suffering: Heroic Hermeneutics:

A third essential exercise of power involves the conscious will to suffer. From his earliest writings the evolving self became a central motif in Nietzsche’s unfolding theory of will to power. A nascent formulation of the contention that willing entails ‘becoming’ over ‘being’ appeared in *The Wanderer and His Shadow*: “Active, successful natures act, not according to the dictum ‘know thyself’, but as if there hovered before them the commandment: *will a self and thou shalt become a self*.”<sup>360</sup> Nietzsche did not believe that one’s goals emanate uncontrollably from the core of one’s being, but rather that one’s goal is to learn to determine that core as much as humanly possible. “*What does your conscience say?*” Nietzsche asked. ““You shall become the person you are.””<sup>361</sup> Hence, a man does not merely will his actions-- he wills himself to grow beyond and yet paradoxically ‘into’ himself. Nietzsche became a champion for “the spectacle of that strength which employs genius *not for works* but for *itself as a work*; that is, for its own constraint, for the purification of its imagination, for the imposition of its order and choice

<sup>358</sup> WP 7 [1886-1887].

<sup>359</sup> WP 318 [1887, 1888].

<sup>360</sup> NR 232.

<sup>361</sup> GS 219. Nietzsche traced this doctrine to Pindar. [HA 161]

upon the influx of tasks and impressions."<sup>362</sup> The 'refined' will to power constitutes, in effect, the will to self-determination despite the seemingly intractable constants of race, gender, and class.

Perhaps the most heroic tenet of Nietzsche's will to power lies in its response to one's own human frailties, ill health, and suffering.<sup>363</sup> In his 1886 second preface to *The Gay Science*, Nietzsche observed that the book was saturated with 'the joy of a convalescent':

'Gay Science': that signifies the saturnalia of a spirit who has patiently resisted a terrible, long pressure-- patiently, severely, coldly, without submitting, but also without hope-- and who is now all at once attacked by hope, the hope for health, and the *intoxication* of convalescence.<sup>364</sup>

The sheer authenticity, which punctuates his writings with the exclamation marks of *joie de vivre* and the ellipses of unmitigated anguish, stems from the remarkable effort by which Nietzsche's personal optimism was birthed through the contractions of unmitigated pain.<sup>365</sup> Early in his writing career, he lauded the benefits of possessing "the Gorgon gaze that instantaneously petrifies everything into a work of art: that gaze from a realm without pain."<sup>366</sup> But Nietzsche refused to surrender to his suffering. His imagination feverishly sought an interpretative framework with which to snatch victory from the ever-present abyss of defeatism.<sup>367</sup> Hence, he once queried, "*What makes one heroic?*-- Going out to meet at the same time one's highest suffering and one's highest hope."<sup>368</sup>

<sup>362</sup> NR 234.

<sup>363</sup> Salomé states, "Suffering and loneliness then are the two great lines of fate in Nietzsche's biography [...] And they bear the strange double face of an *exteriorly fated life* and at the same time a purely psychologically determined *willed inner necessity*." [12] Tanner contends that, "Nietzsche's fundamental concern throughout his life was to plot the relationship between suffering and culture, or cultures." [Nietzsche 27] Safranski argues that Nietzsche 'pharmaceutically' tested concepts by the strength of their relief from his physical afflictions. [55] In January, 1880, he wrote to his doctor, "My existence is an *awful burden*-- I would have dispensed with it long ago, were it not for the most illuminating tests and experiments I have been conducting in matters of mind and morality [...]" [Safranski 178]

<sup>364</sup> GS 32.

<sup>365</sup> As his syphilitic symptoms worsened, resulting in severe migraines and failing vision, he resigned his professorship at Basel by the time he was thirty-six, unable to see "three paces in front of me." [EH 8] See also GS 252 n. 42. His illness culminated in insanity and eventual paralysis. [Tanner Nietzsche 25]

<sup>366</sup> Safranski 27.

<sup>367</sup> For example, he later credited his inability to read as "the *greatest* favour I have ever done myself." [EH 62]

Nietzsche identified a dialectical relation between his genius and his illness: "I have a subtler sense for signs of ascent and decline than any man has ever had, I am the teacher *par excellence* in this matter-- I know both, I am both."<sup>369</sup> Furthermore, the potentiality of losing life at any moment increased his ardour for living: "I know more about life because I have so often been on the verge of losing it; and precisely for that reason I get more out of life than any of you."<sup>370</sup> Nietzsche maintained that, in gouging its glacial girth across the bedrock of the 'higher' soul, suffering excels at deepening the human spirit:

Only great pain, the long, slow pain that takes its time-- on which we are burned, as it were, with green wood-- compels us philosophers to descend into our ultimate depths and to put aside all trust, everything good-natured, everything that would interpose a veil, that is mild, that is medium-- things in which formerly we may have found our humanity. I doubt that such pain makes us 'better'; but I know that it makes us more *profound*.<sup>371</sup>

However, Nietzsche was selective in his application of the benefits of this interpretative *coup d'état*; for, suffering in and of itself is not sufficient to endow one's life with profundity. Rather, one has to seize the opportunity voraciously, tenaciously, hermeneutically-- one has to wrestle life's difficulties and setbacks into the narrative framework of the will.<sup>372</sup> Contrary to the modern man who transforms suffering into "the foremost argument *against* existence",<sup>373</sup> the 'higher' man liberates himself from such slavish hatred by refusing to be defeated by history.<sup>374</sup> As Zarathustra jubilantly espoused, "To redeem the past and to transform every 'It was' into an 'I wanted it thus!' -- that alone do I call redemption."<sup>375</sup> Hence, a strong man is able to rise above the vicissitudes and

<sup>368</sup> GS 219.

<sup>369</sup> EH 8. Hence, during the writing of *Daybreak* in 1880, he discovered that, after "an uninterrupted three-day headache accompanied by the laborious vomiting of phlegm [...] I possessed a dialectical clarity *par excellence* and thought my way very cold-bloodedly through things for which when I am in better health I am not enough of a climber, not refined, not *cold* enough." [EH 9]

<sup>370</sup> GS 243-244.

<sup>371</sup> GS 36. In particular, suffering liberates a person from the shackles of "enduring habits" and mundane mediocrity. [GS 237] See also UM 221.

<sup>372</sup> Nietzsche traced this hermeneutical tactic to both 'early man' and Christianity, which staves off despair by assigning meaning to suffering because, "The aspect of suffering which actually causes outrage is not suffering itself, but the meaninglessness of suffering [...]" [GM 49]

<sup>373</sup> GM 49.

<sup>374</sup> UM 106. Zarathustra attributed all thirst for vengeance to "the will's antipathy towards time and time's 'It was'." [Z 162]

<sup>375</sup> Z 161. However, this situates the past in tension-- if not outright animosity-- with the will: "'It was': that

petty pains of life, and suffering becomes the vehicle of this ascension: "[F]or life must be harder and harder for you. Only thus, only thus does man grow to the height where the lightning can strike and shatter him: high enough for the lightning!"<sup>376</sup>

To summarize, suffering is not merely beneficial to the 'higher' man -- it is essential. In opposition to the peddlers and meddlers of mediocrity, who seek to avoid discomfort at all costs, Nietzsche proclaimed,

We think that severity, force, slavery, peril in the street and in the heart, concealment, stoicism, the art of experiment and devilry of every kind, that everything evil, dreadful, tyrannical, beast of prey and serpent in man serves to enhance the species 'man' just as much as does its opposite-- we do not say enough when we say even that much [...]<sup>377</sup>

It would, therefore, be counter-productive for a true proponent of the human species to eliminate the catalyst for all that is great, noble, and upright in man, "the discipline of great suffering":

That tension of the soul in misfortune which cultivates its strength, its terror at the sight of great destruction, its inventiveness and bravery in undergoing, enduring, interpreting, exploiting misfortune, and whatever of depth, mystery, mask, spirit, cunning and greatness has been bestowed upon it-- has it not been bestowed through suffering, through the discipline of great suffering?<sup>378</sup>

Like 'sin' and 'redemption', pain becomes a value judgment existing primarily in the mind, to be re-evaluated within a more promising metanarrative;<sup>379</sup> for, mighty spirits only emerge from the 'smithies' of unrelenting anguish and adversity.<sup>380</sup>

is what the will's teeth-gnashing and most lonely affliction is called."

<sup>376</sup> Z 299. For life as "a craft which must be learned from the ground up and practised remorselessly", see UM 118.

<sup>377</sup> BG 72. See also WP 206 [1887, 1888]: "I assess the *power* of a *will* by how much resistance, pain, torture it endures and knows how to turn to its advantage; I do not account the evil and painful character of existence a reproach to it, but hope rather that it will one day be more evil and painful than hitherto--"

<sup>378</sup> BG 155.

<sup>379</sup> HA 77: "When a misfortune strikes us, we can overcome it either by removing its cause or else by changing the effect it has on our feelings, that is, by reinterpreting the misfortune as a good, whose benefit may only later become clear." In a notebook entry, Nietzsche even denied ontological reality to 'pain', which he considered "an *intellectual* occurrence in which a definite judgment is expressed-- the judgment '*harmful*' in which a long experience is summarized. There is no pain as such." [WP 371 (1888)]

<sup>380</sup> WP 465 [1887-1888]: "[O]ne must be faced with the choice of perishing or prevailing. A dominating race



#### D. Employing 'Cruelty':

It becomes unnervingly evident that Nietzsche's attitude towards suffering elides eerily into the subject of domination and the necessity of 'cruelty' for the perfecting of the species. Suffering becomes, for Nietzsche, an integral distinction in the widening rift between higher and lower types of men, an elitist means of advancement over the shallow masses:

The spiritual haughtiness and disgust of every human being who has suffered deeply-- *how* deeply human beings can suffer almost determines their order of rank-- the harrowing certainty, with which he is wholly permeated and colored, that by virtue of his suffering he *knows more* than even the cleverest and wisest can know, that he is familiar with, and was once 'at home' in, many distant, terrible worlds of which '*you know nothing!*'... this spiritual, silent haughtiness of the sufferer, this pride of the elect of knowledge, of the 'initiated', of the almost sacrifice, finds all forms of disguise necessary to protect itself against contact with importunate and pitying hands and in general against everything which is not its equal in suffering. Profound suffering ennobles; it separates.<sup>381</sup>

Because adversity is so essential to the formation of an exceptional man, Nietzsche wished "suffering, desolation, sickness, ill-treatment, indignities, [...] profound self-contempt, the torture of self-mistrust, the wretchedness of the vanquished" on those he showed 'concern' for.<sup>382</sup>

Once suffering has been necessitated within a philosophical project for species succession, it takes an alarmingly small step to conclude that the instigation of and/ or

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can grow up only out of terrible and violent beginnings."

<sup>381</sup> BG 209. In an alarmingly racist passage, Nietzsche suggested that human ancestors had a higher tolerance to pain, given recent findings that 'less-evolved' Negroes experience less internal inflammation than Europeans. [GM 49] Rather than denigrating existence on account of suffering, Nietzsche insisted, "[W]e would do well to remember the times when exactly the opposite conclusion was drawn, because mankind did not want to forgo the *infliction* of suffering, seeing in it an enchantment of the first rank, an actual seduction and lure *in favour of life*."

<sup>382</sup> WP 481 [1887]. Tanner is right to warn of not misinterpreting his condemnation on 'pity' as condoning "neglect of others' basic requirements": "His attack is concerned with pity as a full-time occupation of sorting out people's lives, with a noble neglect, as we are taught, of one's own interests." [Nietzsche 43] Houlgate usefully calls attention to "the Schopenhauerian ideal of pity with which he confused Christian love". [Hegel 68] Safranski argues that Nietzsche attempted to compensate for the self-loathing he felt from a personal "excess of forgiveness" and compassion. [167] It is rather telling that Nietzsche's final collapse may have been precipitated by witnessing the vicious beating of a mare in Turin, which he halted by hugging the horse.

refusal to alleviate suffering benefits the species by engendering hardier specimens.<sup>383</sup> Moreover, by interpreting all human actions, regardless of their altruistic appearances, as attempts to gain power over the other,<sup>384</sup> cruelty in action and intent appears both ubiquitous and unavoidable. Nietzsche averred that, without "the spiritualization and intensification of *cruelty*" towards former ideals and 'truths', higher culture cannot progress or even exist:

What the Roman in the arena, the Christian in the ecstasies of the Cross, the Spaniard watching burnings or bullfights, the Japanese of today crowding in to the tragedy, the Parisian suburban workman who has a nostalgia for bloody revolutions, the Wagnerienne who, with will suspended, 'experiences' *Tristan und Isolde*-- what all of these enjoy and look with secret ardour to imbibe is the spicy portion of the great Circe 'cruelty'.<sup>385</sup>

From *Don Quixote* to the penitentiary, Nietzsche observed the inevitable welding of civilization and barbarity, cruelty and culture, the promulgation of toughness for the promise of longevity: "To witness suffering does one good, to inflict it even more so-- that is a harsh proposition, but a fundamental one, an old, powerful, human all-too-human proposition, one to which perhaps even the apes would subscribe [...]"<sup>386</sup>

Such tolerable cruelty does not entail the wanton use of physical force, however, since such unsophisticated deployment of power constitutes "a sign that we are still lacking power, or it shows a sense of frustration in the face of this poverty".<sup>387</sup> Rather, in *Daybreak* Nietzsche pondered how to make a virtue of "refined cruelty",<sup>388</sup> while Zarathustra advocated the Jacob-ian art of combat: "I wrestled long and was a wrestler, so that I might one day have my hands free for blessing."<sup>389</sup> Furthermore, Nietzsche warned of the dangers of self-dissolution from constant conflict: "He who fights with monsters

<sup>383</sup> Kain hypothesizes that the deliberate infliction of suffering legitimates cultural myths, thus 'keeping the true evil-- meaningless suffering-- at bay'. [142-143]

<sup>384</sup> For example, GS 86.

<sup>385</sup> BG 159. He once declared that no action of distinction is possible without an injustice to the past wherein the actor "recognizes the rights only of that which is now to come into being and no other rights whatever." [UM 64] History itself shows no kindness to the past: "[A]s long as the study of history serves life and is directed by the vital drives, the past itself suffers." [UM 74]

<sup>386</sup> GM 48.

<sup>387</sup> GS 87.

<sup>388</sup> Safranski 187.

<sup>389</sup> Z 186. Cf. Gen. 32:24-30.

should look to it that he himself does not become a monster."<sup>390</sup> However, the philosopher seemed all-too-willing to relax this principle with regards to the *Übermensch*. Hence, he instructed all "preparatory human beings":

[T]he secret for harvesting from existence the greatest fruitfulness and the greatest enjoyment is-- to *live dangerously*! Build your cities on the slopes of Vesuvius! Send your ships into uncharted seas! Live at war with your peers and yourselves! Be robbers and conquerors as long as you cannot be rulers and possessors, you seekers of knowledge!<sup>391</sup>

This explains why he remained a staunch opponent of egalitarian movements. With regards to women's rights, he once exclaimed,

[T]o deny here the most abysmal antagonism and the necessity of an eternally hostile tension, perhaps to dream here of equal rights, equal education, equal claims and duties: this is a *typical* sign of shallow-mindedness, and a thinker who has proved himself to be shallow on this dangerous point-- shallow of instinct!-- may be regarded as suspect in general [...]<sup>392</sup>

Nietzsche might have offered the following responses to defend the necessitation of cruelty within his philosophical project. First, 'cruelty' is a hermeneutical rather than ontological reality and, as such, a highly relative valuation reflecting the self-interests of the interpreter.<sup>393</sup> As part of the natural world, humankind and all of its 'civilized' structures are inextricably embedded in the 'cruelty' necessary to survival, advancement, and innovation. Thus, savagery is inescapable:

The whole past of the old culture is built on violence, slavery, deception, error; but we, the heirs of all these conditions, indeed the convergence of that whole past, cannot decree ourselves away, and cannot want to remove one particular part. The unjust frame of mind lies in the souls of the 'have-nots', too; they are no better than the 'haves', and have no special moral privilege, for at some point their forefathers were 'haves', too.<sup>394</sup>

<sup>390</sup> BG 102.

<sup>391</sup> GS 228. Similarly, Zarathustra exclaimed: "Thus commands my great love for the most distant men: *Do not spare your neighbour!* Man is something that must be overcome [...] Overcome yourself even in your neighbour: and a right that you can seize for yourself you should not accept as a gift!" [Z 215-216]

<sup>392</sup> BG 166.

<sup>393</sup> Hence, in contrast to the 'slave morality' of Christianity, which condemned the liberties of the aristocratic 'predators' to safeguard bovine security, Nietzsche asserted that, "the healthier, stronger, richer, more fruitful, more enterprising a man feels, the more 'immoral' he will be, too." [WP 213 (1887-1888)] He also maintained that, "[f]ightful energies-- that which is called evil-- are the Cyclopean architects and path makers of humanity." [HA 151]

<sup>394</sup> HA 216. Nehamas observes that, although Nietzsche does not admire the "barbarian nobles" primarily for their cruelty, "neither, to be fair, does he criticize them on that account". [215]

Social niceties such as gratitude,<sup>395</sup> morality,<sup>396</sup> and dialogue are merely 'milder' interpretations of attaining distinction and dominating others.<sup>397</sup>

Second, cruelty is ubiquitously embodied within the material universe and is a 'natural', unavoidable means by which power is consolidated.<sup>398</sup> Nietzsche maintained that sociological cruelties such as class injustice and oppression plays a pivotal role in the development of psychological distinctions:

Without the *pathos of distance* such as develops from the incarnate differences of classes, from the ruling caste's constant looking out and looking down on subjects and instruments and from its equally constant exercise of obedience and command, its holding down and holding at a distance, that other, more mysterious pathos could not have developed either, that longing for an ever-increasing widening of distance within the soul itself, the formation of ever higher, rarer, more remote, tenser, more comprehensive states, in short precisely the elevation of the type 'man', the continual 'self-overcoming of man', to take a moral formula in a supramoral sense.<sup>399</sup>

He argued that the impact of Christianity in demonizing suffering ("the *will* to misunderstand suffering"), promulgating existential 'coziness', and binding crucial life-promoting instincts in a 'strait-jacket' of endless guilt, constitutes genuine cruelty towards nature and humankind. Cruelty to particular individuals and classes is, therefore, negligible if it constitutes a greater kindness to the species as a whole.<sup>400</sup>

Third, to defend the role of cruelty in his project, Nietzsche would probably insist

<sup>395</sup> HA 46.

<sup>396</sup> HA 69: "*Force* precedes morality; indeed, for a time morality itself is force, to which others acquiesce to avoid unpleasure. Later it becomes custom, and still later free obedience, and finally almost instinct: then it is coupled to pleasure, like all habitual and natural things, and is now called *virtue*."

<sup>397</sup> HA 50. On the essentiality of war, see HA 230.

<sup>398</sup> See HA 10: "You had to learn to grasp the *necessary* injustice in every For and Against; to grasp that injustice is inseparable from life, that life itself is *determined* by perspective and its injustice." The universality of self-cruelty within human culture alone encompasses all areas "wherever man allows himself to be persuaded to self-denial in the *religious* sense, or to self-mutilation, as among Phoenicians and ascetics, or in general to desensualization, decarnalization, contrition, to Puritanical spasms of repentance, to conscience-- vivisection and to a Pascalian *sacrificial dell'intelletto*". [BG 159-160] Nietzsche regarded the hyperbolic ethic in the Sermon on the Mount as an instance of man taking "a voluptuous pleasure in violating himself by exaggerated demands and then deifying this something in his soul that is so tyrannically taxing." [HA 95]

<sup>399</sup> BG 192.

<sup>400</sup> GM 118-119. Nietzsche once suggested, "[W]hen one makes men more evil, one makes them better-- and [...] one cannot be one without being the other". [WP 416 (1887)] There can be no "superhuman" without the "superbeast". [WP 531 (1887)]



that he was not advocating wanton violence or anarchical instability, but a selective and highly sophisticated, controlled 'cruelty' directed at outmoded institutions and fabricated 'truths' which were, in actuality, cruelly obstructing the species from higher development and preserving society's 'miscarriages'.<sup>401</sup> Moreover, such will to cruelty is restricted to a minority of elite and well-cultivated individuals in any given society.<sup>402</sup>

Finally, Nietzsche did not endorse any outward cruelty which wasn't first and foremost directed inwards by the higher individual himself.<sup>403</sup> He adamantly emphasized that the key to higher humankind consists first and foremost of "*mature* freedom of the spirit which is fully as much self-mastery and discipline of the heart, and which permits paths to many opposing rays of thought."<sup>404</sup> Nietzsche once distinguished the category of genius by its exceptional self-severity, which lies at the heart of all remarkable achievements: "The genius-- in his works, in his deeds-- is necessarily a prodigal: his greatness lies in the fact that *he expends himself*. . . . The instinct of self-preservation is as it were suspended; the overwhelming pressure of the energies which emanate from him forbids him any such care and prudence."<sup>405</sup>

The will to self-cruelty takes several forms in Nietzsche's writings. First, it manifests itself in relentless self-scrutiny. Since life in its entirety has become "a means of knowledge",<sup>406</sup> the 'scientific' explorer subjects himself to rigorous testing and self-vivisection: "Our attitude towards ourselves is one of hubris, for we experiment with ourselves in a way which we would never allow ourselves to experiment with any animal,

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<sup>401</sup> WP 389 [1888]: "Society, as the great trustee of life, is responsible to life itself for every miscarried life -- it also has to pay for such lives: consequently it ought to prevent them [....] Life itself recognizes no solidarity, no 'equal rights', between the healthy and the degenerate parts of an organism: one must excise the latter-- or the whole will perish." He contested the universal right to exist in WP 467 [1884]. In GS 129, a holy man once advised a father to kill a severely handicapped newborn arguing, "But is it not crueler to let it live?"

<sup>402</sup> Hence, after the common men, the "farmers of the spirit", have settled and "exploited" all available land, "the plowshare of evil must come again and again" to break up the over-packed soils. [GS 79]

<sup>403</sup> See UM 119, where he advocated that "each one of this generation must overcome himself"; that is, "the nature already educated into one."

<sup>404</sup> HA 7.

<sup>405</sup> TI 109.

<sup>406</sup> GS 255.

we derive pleasure from our curious dissection of the soul of a living body."<sup>407</sup> However, this spiritual experimentation, unfettered by conventional morality and driven by "genius *not for works but for itself as a work*"<sup>408</sup> opens the door to explorations of human brutality beyond the self:

Who will attain anything great if he does not find in himself the strength and the will to *inflict* great suffering? Being able to suffer is the least thing; weak women and even slaves often achieve virtuosity in that. But not to perish of internal distress and uncertainty when one inflicts great suffering and hears the cry of this suffering-- that is great, that belongs to greatness.<sup>409</sup>

Second, self-cruelty is incarnated in all 'ascetic' tendencies, which originate in men whose efforts at external mastery have failed: "[I]t finally occurs to them to tyrannize certain parts of their own being, as if they were sections or stages of their selves."<sup>410</sup> However, self-cruelty is also championed as a means for actualizing the commanding idea which benefits the race-- the sacrifice of both the one and the many for the greater accomplishment of the superspecies.<sup>411</sup>

#### E. Aestheticizing the World:

Throughout Nietzsche's writings, there is a tendency for the 'transcendental givenness' of the world to be supplanted by a hermeneutical *tabula rasa* of becomings and limitless potentialities: the aestheticization of the humanly perceived 'world'. In *The Birth of Tragedy*, he contested Schopenhauer's belief that the efficacy of music pertains to the interaction between the 'subjective' listener and the 'objective' purity of the acoustic stimuli. Instead, Nietzsche argued that the distinction between art and artist, 'subjective'

<sup>407</sup> GM 92. See also GS 253.

<sup>408</sup> NR 234.

<sup>409</sup> GS 255. Kaufmann tempers this section by interpreting this inflicted suffering as the grief which Nietzsche's radical views caused his family and friends. [GS 255, n. 52]

<sup>410</sup> HA 95. See also UM 163. Asceticism is not confined to Christianity, however. Nietzsche criticized Stoicism for entertaining "the Bedlamite hope that, *because* you know how to tyrannize over yourselves [...] nature too can be tyrannized over". [BG 39]

<sup>411</sup> WP 380 [1888]: "[M]ankind is merely the experimental material, the tremendous surplus of failures: a field of ruins." See also WP 360 [1883-1888]: "The basic phenomenon: countless individuals sacrificed for the sake of a few, to make them possible.-- One must not let oneself be deceived; it is just the same with peoples and races: they constitute the 'body' for the production of isolated valuable individuals, who carry on the great process." Clark suggests that Nietzsche's "main complaint" against herd morality is that, "there is nothing in it to play the role of the ascetic ideal". [856]

and 'objective' realities breaks down:

[B]ut we can indeed assume for our own part that we are images and artistic projections for the true creator of that world, and that our highest dignity lies in the meaning of works of art-- for it is only as an *aesthetic phenomenon* that existence and the world are eternally *justified*-- while of course our awareness of our meaning differs hardly at all from the awareness that warriors painted on canvas have of the battle portrayed.<sup>412</sup>

If the natural universe is, in fact, overlaid with an aesthetic veneer to become 'the world as we know it', the world can be embraced for its beauty,<sup>413</sup> the standards of which are open to a rich variety of interpretations which are not predetermined to be 'good' or 'evil' in and of themselves.<sup>414</sup> In *The Gay Science*, he observed that the 'higher man' needs assistance to dispel the illusion of 'external' truth:

The higher human being always becomes at the same time happier and unhappier. But he can never shake off a *delusion*: He fancies that he is a *spectator* and *listener* who has been placed before the great visual and acoustic spectacle that is life; he calls his own nature *contemplative* and overlooks that he himself is really the poet who keeps creating this life.<sup>415</sup>

This accorded Nietzsche a great deal of optimism:<sup>416</sup> if human beings are self-generated/self-generating works of art, then the species can theoretically be shaped within the hands of a capable philosophical 'potter', so long as he receives pristine materials with which to work.<sup>417</sup> An important polemical offshoot is that an 'aestheticized' world allows previously 'transcendent' and 'God-given' mores to be subverted, with "*taste* as the sole

<sup>412</sup> BT 32. However, Nietzsche somewhat inconsistently still maintained that this aesthetic reality can be distinguished from the foundations of nature upon which it was based: "[A]rt is not only an imitation of the truth of nature but a metaphysical supplement to that truth of nature, coexisting with it in order to overcome it." [BT 114] Nehamas creatively endeavours to reconcile Nietzsche's perspectivism with his many apparent truth-claims by arguing that Nietzsche resolved this paradox by 'creating an artwork out of himself, a literary character who is a philosopher'. [8] Though an intriguing premise, it is difficult to reconcile this view with Nietzsche's avowed aversion to idealization: how can he oppose the idealization of the whole world yet completely idealize himself?

<sup>413</sup> In a notebook entry, Nietzsche once ascribed 'the highest sign of power' to beauty, "because in beauty opposites are tamed; the highest sign of power, namely power over opposites; moreover, without tension:-- that violence is no longer needed". [WP 422 (1883-1888)]

<sup>414</sup> The aesthetizing of the world provides a useful corollary in suspending the importance of historical effect: as with a 'work of art', it is no longer fair to "appraise the value of a man according to how useful he is to men, or how much he costs, or what harm he does to them". [WP 469 (1887)]

<sup>415</sup> GS 241.

<sup>416</sup> On art as "the only superior counterforce to all will to denial of life, as that which is anti-Christian, anti-Buddhist, antinihilist *par excellence*", see WP 452-453 [1886].

<sup>417</sup> Some commentators suggest that Nietzsche's writing is itself an exercise in self-creation. Thomas Mann exclaims: "[D]own to his self-mythologizing in his last moment, down to madness, this life was an artistic

means of arbitrating between values".<sup>418</sup> It also counters the sting of reality's most biting tragedies by injecting an artistic distance:

As an aesthetic phenomenon existence is still *bearable* for us, and art furnishes us with eyes and hands and above all the good conscience to be *able* to turn ourselves into such a phenomenon. At times we need a rest from ourselves and, from an artistic distance, laughing *over* ourselves or weeping *over* ourselves.<sup>419</sup>

Furthermore, the 'aesthetic' epistemology fosters a structure conducive to elitism and hierarchy by generating a 'canon' of men whose evaluation is determined exclusively by 'experts', and who, subsequently, merit the highest pedestals of privilege and freedom.

Nietzsche's aesthetic emphasis encompassed many of his predominant themes: instincts over reason, the necessity of conflict, the celebration of the sensual, corporeal world, the superabundance of the 'higher' man, the privileged status of genius, and the supplanting of ontology by hermeneutics. From *The Birth of Tragedy* onwards, Nietzsche esteemed the Dionysian aesthetic-- based upon "the desire for destruction, for change, for *becoming*"-- over the Apolline aesthetic-- based upon "the desire for rigidity, eternity, *being*"-- which, driven by a profound disdain for materiality, resulted in an art of 'impoverishment' instead of the Dionysian "overfull power pregnant with the future".<sup>420</sup> Nietzsche contended that, "[f]or art to exist, for any sort of aesthetic activity or perception to exist, a certain physiological precondition is indispensable: *intoxication*",<sup>421</sup> a condition which resonates with the superabundant power of the 'higher' man: "The essence of intoxication is the feeling of plenitude and increased energy. From out of this feeling one gives to things, one *compels* them to take, one rapes them-- one calls this process idealizing."<sup>422</sup> The self-styled philosopher-poet had no patience for any alleged neutrality of art: "[W]hat does all art do? Does it not praise? By doing all this it *strengthens* or

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production [...] a lyric, tragic spectacle, and one of utmost fascination [...]" [Safranski 324-325]

<sup>418</sup> Zeitlin 171. Though Nietzsche would have also applied his universal standard of 'life-enhancement' to gage the relative worth of values.

<sup>419</sup> GS 163-164.

<sup>420</sup> WP 445-446 [1885-1886].

<sup>421</sup> Intoxication encompasses sexual excitement, military vanquishing, cruelty, destruction, celebration, indulgence in narcotics, the change of seasons, and "the intoxication of an overloaded and distended will". [TI 82-83]

<sup>422</sup> TI 83.



weakens certain valuations."<sup>423</sup> The image of artist and *Übermensch* apparently merge as Nietzsche elucidated the topic of intoxication:

In this condition one enriches everything out of one's own abundance: what one sees, what one desires, one sees swollen, pressing, strong, over-laden with energy. The man in this condition transforms things until they mirror his power-- until they are reflections of his perfection. This *compulsion* to transform into the perfect is-- art.<sup>424</sup>

The will to art would resonate in its most ambitious manifestation within the philosophical vision of the *Überkünstler* himself-- the drafting of a destiny, the sculpting of the species.

#### F. Breeding the Species:

In an 1884 notebook entry, Nietzsche equated the artist with an unrelenting desire for dominance:

*Misunderstanding of egoism*-- on the part of *common* natures who know nothing whatever of the pleasure of conquest and the insatiability of great love, nor of the overflowing feeling of strength that desires to overpower, to compel to itself, to lay to its heart-- the drive of the artist in relation to his material.<sup>425</sup>

Nietzsche had no qualms over couching this drive for mastery within metaphysical motifs. Hence, he once abrogated the powers of the Creator within the creative potential of certain men:

There is a slavish love that submits and gives itself; that idealizes, and deceives itself-- there is a divine love that despises and loves, and reshapes and elevates the beloved. To gain that tremendous energy of greatness in order to shape the men of the future through breeding and, on the other hand, the annihilation of millions of failures, and not to perish of the suffering one creates, though nothing like it has ever existed!<sup>426</sup>

<sup>423</sup> TI 92.

<sup>424</sup> TI 83. The particular thrust of the phallic overtones of a patriarchal vision of masculinity bear down full-throttle in this passage.

<sup>425</sup> WP 467 [1884].

<sup>426</sup> WP 506 [1884]. Strong highlights the significance of breeding in Nietzsche's thought as well as the 'facile' manoeuvres by which commentators attempt to avoid this political minefield. [274] He focuses specifically upon the doctrine of eternal recurrence which, Nietzsche hoped, will instigate a "neurophysiological" transformation in man. [Strong 285] Golomb argues: "The transfiguration of our nature and the sublimation of our desires and psychological makeup, which provide the necessary and sufficient conditions of the morality of positive power, distance Nietzsche from Nazi eugenics or racism based on a given or preferred set of biological traits." ["De-Nazify" 40] By this point, there is no need to repeat my objections to a revaluation of Nietzsche's power as self-mastery, as much as I agree with Golomb that Nietzsche should not be unfairly condemned as a proto-Nazi sympathizer. Although he writes,

Much of his model for crafting the species was derived from the personal impact which Schopenhauer had upon him. He once described Schopenhauer's legacy as the knowledge that,

[n]either riches nor honours nor erudition can lift the individual out of the profound depression he feels at the valuelessness of his existence, and how the striving after these valued things acquires meaning only through an exalted and transfiguring overall goal: to acquire power so as to aid the evolution of the *physis* and to be for a while the corrector of its follies and ineptitudes.<sup>427</sup>

Wagner was another methodological influence, whose music "transmits the fundamental impulses in the depths of the persons represented in the drama directly to the soul of the listeners" with greater impact than the gestures and words of the characters.<sup>428</sup> Further development was fostered while Nietzsche ruminated over the inadequacies of Darwin's theory of species, begging the question of how one might strengthen the race.<sup>429</sup>

In a letter dated July, 1883, Nietzsche wrote: "We should persevere in realizing our idea of man; we ought to be adamant about enforcing it on others as well as on ourselves, and thus exert a creative impact!"<sup>430</sup> Nietzsche's project of shaping the species represents a nexus of several key emphases in his thought: the primacy of the natural, physical world, the revaluation of human 'good' and human 'evil', the attempt to control nature through cultural institutions, the creative mastery of the artist, the universal *telos* of constructing larger power units, and the predominance of a 'commanding idea', which endeavours to "implant a need" in the human breast so that "out of a vigorous need there will one day

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"Actually, the only idea of race that Nietzsche ever looked upon with favor was that of a *mixed* race (as mixed as possible)-- a European race sprung from innumerable intermarriages between 'the best aristocracy of Europe' and the Jews (D, 205; HH I:475)", ["De-Nazify" 41] one might question how such a selective grouping represents 'as mixed as possible' a race.

<sup>427</sup> UM 142. For the influence of the caste-endorsing *Laws of Manu*, which represents "a clever impolitic of breeding that would prevent degeneration", see Safranski 311.

<sup>428</sup> UM 239. His indebtedness to Wagner is reflected by the artistic aura radiated by the *Übermensch*. Nietzsche's own writings strongly parallel his analysis of Wagner's self-commentaries: "They are attempts to comprehend the instinct which impelled him to create his works, and as it were to set himself before his own eyes; if he can only manage to transform his instinct into knowledge, he hopes the reverse process will take place within the souls of his readers: it is with this objective that he writes." [UM 248] This may partially explain why Nietzsche later insisted that Untimely Meditations 3 and 4 were ultimately about himself and his personal development as a thinker. [UM xxx]

<sup>429</sup> HA 139.

<sup>430</sup> Safranski 167.

arise a vigorous deed."<sup>431</sup> Even his aphoristic style, Tanner notes, was calculated towards "transforming the reader's consciousness".<sup>432</sup>

In his role as philosophical breeder, Nietzsche considered himself to be a veritable 'blood' hound: "I have in this sensitivity psychological antennae with which I touch and take hold of every secret: all the *concealed* dirt at the bottom of many a nature, perhaps conditioned by bad blood but whitewashed by education, is known to me almost on first contact."<sup>433</sup> And yet, he simultaneously sought to effect a change in the cultural and philosophical climate of his era to bolster better the emergence of his delicate, 'tropical' superspecies. The fostering of "a more virile, warlike age" is instrumental for the evolution of an even higher age: "To this end we now need many preparatory courageous human beings who cannot very well leap out of nothing, any more than out of the sand and slime of present-day civilization and metropolitanism [...]"<sup>434</sup> Enthralled by the measured upspringing and upbringing of the aristocracy, Nietzsche believed that the discovery and conquest of brave new worlds-- philosophical or otherwise-- rely solely upon those who are "born or, expressed more clearly, *bred* for it".<sup>435</sup>

Rejecting the "shrunk, almost ludicrous species, a herd animal, something full of good will, sickly and mediocre [which] has been bred, the European of today",<sup>436</sup> Nietzsche sought "forefathers and ancestors of the *Übermensch*",<sup>437</sup> those who strive "[n]ot to bear their race to the grave, but to found a new generation of this race".<sup>438</sup> Such an artistic 'medium' demonstrates biological as well as cultural/ philosophical superiority, boasting a psychological 'genome' which can-- to a certain degree-- be philosophically engineered. As early as 1884, he contended, "A doctrine is needed powerful enough to work as a breeding agent: strengthening the strong; paralysing and destructive for the

<sup>431</sup> UM 82. On implanting habits, see also HA 76.

<sup>432</sup> Tanner *Nietzsche* 23.

<sup>433</sup> EH 18.

<sup>434</sup> GS 228.

<sup>435</sup> BG 145.

<sup>436</sup> BG 339. Nietzsche singled out Germans for special censure in this regard. Their resuscitation depended upon "a matter of will, of work, of discipline, of breeding". [WP 68 (1885)]

<sup>437</sup> Z 110.

<sup>438</sup> UM 106.

world-weary.”<sup>439</sup> The extent to which a judgment is “life-advancing, life-preserving, species preserving, perhaps even species-breeding” formed the basis of his philosophical and moral assessments.<sup>440</sup> This ‘commanding thought’ would remain with him throughout his writing career. Hence, even as his demoralization grew over the rampant dissemination of ‘slave’ culture across Europe, he mused, “The increasing dwarfing of man is precisely the driving force that brings to mind the breeding of a stronger race-- a race that would be excessive precisely where the dwarfed species was weak and growing weaker (in will, responsibility, self-assurance, ability to posit goals for oneself).”<sup>441</sup>

To recapitulate, Nietzsche was able to consolidate his validated exercises of power-- moral revaluation, the destruction of deleterious ‘truths’, the brave acceptance and volitional approval of suffering, the deployment of cruelty to self and to others, and the aestheticization of the material world -- within the role of ‘philosophical breeder’, whose job description entails the grandiose and ‘god-like’ project of “strengthening and enhancement for the human type.”<sup>442</sup> While humankind supplies the ‘raw materials’ for this illustrious program of ‘philosophical eugenics’, as defined by “we free spirits”, the philosopher remains “the man of the most comprehensive responsibility who has the conscience for the collective evolution of mankind”, who alone is capable of selecting and rejecting diverse cultural components-- religious, political, economic, etc.-- “for his work of education and breeding”.<sup>443</sup>

#### G. Conclusion:

Throughout Nietzsche’s elaborate development of the will to power, one can observe a glowing thread of intentionality and purpose leading humankind through the winding recurrences of nature’s magisterially indifferent ‘labyrinth’. All of the natural universe blindly surges towards the formation of larger power units, and human beings

<sup>439</sup> WP 458 [1884].

<sup>440</sup> BG 35.

<sup>441</sup> WP 477-478 [1888].

<sup>442</sup> GS 338.

<sup>443</sup> BG 86. Hence, Nietzsche fiercely opposed Christianity’s ‘perverse’ attempts to ‘emasculate’ the species rather than “taking into service the great sources of strength, those impetuous torrents of the soul that are so



must accept their deprivileged positions within this cosmic dynamo. According to Nietzsche, humankind's primary purpose is to better itself to the point of species self-sacrifice, overcoming humanity in order to actualize the advent of the super-species. As such, he did not endeavour to establish specific societal reforms or found new institutes or hierarchies which differ significantly from the time-tested formulae of ancient Rome and Greece.<sup>444</sup> In a moment of self-eulogization, he once explained:

I am not a man, I am dynamite.-- And with all that there is nothing in me of a founder of religion-- religions are affairs of the rabble. I have need of washing my hands after contact with religious people... I do not *want* 'believers', I think I am too malicious to believe in myself, I never speak to masses... I have a terrible fear I shall one day be pronounced *holy* [...] I do not want to be a saint, rather even a buffoon... Perhaps I am a buffoon... And none the less, or rather *not* none the less-- for there has hitherto been nothing more mendacious than saints-- the truth speaks out of me.-- But my truth is *dreadful*: for hitherto the *lie* has been called truth.-- *Revaluation of all values*: this is my formula for an act of supreme coming-to-oneself on the part of mankind which in me has become flesh and genius.<sup>445</sup>

Given his feverish exuberance to embrace all of the material universe, Nietzsche would not waste one iota of fact or fiction. In its ideal form, even Christianity can be transformed into something life-enhancing, both by promulgating peace and prosperity among a pacified populace, as well as by training exceptional individuals in honour and ascetic self-strengthening. In its more virulent forms, Christianity becomes a menace to materiality, demolishing the barriers of rank and social privilege and inundating all of Europe with its slave values. While the Christian faith represented, for Nietzsche, a refuge and bastion of mediocrity for the motley masses who live in collective fear and hatred of exceptionality, it ironically comprised the sole sanctum for the safety and sanctity of exceptionality for another brilliant nineteenth-century thinker who also went to great lengths to keep his distance from the masses of Christendom.

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often dangerous and overwhelming, and economizing them". [WP 207 (1888)]

<sup>444</sup> On the "banality" of Nietzsche's proposed morality, see Nehamas 221-222.

<sup>445</sup> EH 96. Safranski posits that Nietzsche periodically toyed with the notion of a bicameral system of culture which balances scientific knowledge with passion/ aestheticized 'truth': "If he had held to it, he might well

## Chapter 4: To Have and Uphold: Kierkegaard's View of the Universe:

### I. The Cosmological Tier:

Because of the anti-systematic nature of Kierkegaard's corpus, deliberately designed to thwart philosophical dissection, it is difficult to extract a particular theme-- such as power-- which is diffused throughout the authorship. On the basis of Kierkegaard's theological convictions, the Christian's relationship to power stems from her identification with Christ, the paradigm for all human experience. However, the Incarnation is inextricably embedded within the all-encompassing goodness of divine Providence. Thus, in order to comprehend his concept of power on an individual level, it is necessary to examine the over-arching principles of cosmology, divine and human identity, and authority which permeate his writings. The following two chapters will adopt the same three-tier approach in the analysis of Nietzsche's thought. However, Kierkegaard's model will be more extensive, given his acceptance of a supernatural or eternal reality in addition to 'created' reality. Subsequently, each tier incorporates a dichotomy: the cosmological tier explicates the relationship between the temporal and the eternal; the anthropological tier examines the relation between the crowd and the individual; the tier of authority explores the relation between the sensate and the spiritual, between individuals both inside and outside the authentic Christian church.

#### A. Outlining the Divisions:

The main reason for emphasizing the bifurcation of the eternal from the temporal is to indicate the centrality of Kierkegaard's insistence on the incommensurability between the 'quantitative' sphere of the created order and the 'qualitative' sphere of the eternal.<sup>446</sup> This 'Athanasian' *chorismos*<sup>447</sup> was particularly crucial for Kierkegaard due to the

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have spared himself some of his mad visions of grand politics and the will to power." [200]

<sup>446</sup> BA 38.

<sup>447</sup> A qualitative barrier which expressed the 'chasm' of heterogeneity between God and creation, as insisted upon by Athanasius during his debates against the Arians. [Athanasius 121]

prevalent cultural and intellectual assimilation of the religious by the aesthetic sphere.<sup>448</sup> On the surface, this stark dichotomy might suggest either a denigration of the created order in favour of the eternal-- justifying Nietzsche's abhorrence of transcendental escapism-- or a spectacularly remote God, safely sterilized in an inaccessible, 'shrink-wrapped' seal of omnipotent insouciance. However, both would be gross misrepresentations of Kierkegaard's personal beliefs, particularly in light of his scathing critique of Hegelianism for obliterating the contingent via the ideal.<sup>449</sup>

There are at least three central nexuses in Kierkegaard's thought which crucially link the temporal and the eternal. First, the created order is entirely dependent for its existence upon God and his ongoing participation in history,<sup>450</sup> a relationship which is intrinsically grounded in divine freedom and love: "What is it that really binds the temporal and the eternal? What is it other than love, which therefore is before everything else and remains when all else is past."<sup>451</sup> Because God has brought everything into being, humans are responsible for maintaining an attitude of gratitude and love towards the world and everything in it; hence, for Kierkegaard, transcendental escapism is not an option, as it betrays a fundamental mistrust in Providence.<sup>452</sup> Second, temporality and eternity are forever wedded in the quintessential paradox and central truth claim of Christianity, the Incarnation: "that the eternal once came into existence in time".<sup>453</sup> Moreover, when individuals enter a moment of decision before God, that "moment" entails a 'meeting' of time and eternity.<sup>454</sup> Third, every human being represents a bond of created matter and

<sup>448</sup> UP I 432.

<sup>449</sup> For example, BA 22 [July 4, 1840]. Contrary to Hegel's epistemological tyranny of the ideal, Kierkegaard maintained, "But actuality (historical actuality) stands in a two-fold relation to the subject: partly as a gift that refuses to be rejected, partly as a task that wants to be fulfilled." [CI 276] In response to Lessing's contention that 'accidental truths' are incommensurable with 'essential truths', Climacus observed: "The basis of the paradox of Christianity is that it continually uses time and the historical in relation to the eternal." [UP I 95] Accordingly, it was Platonism and not Christianity which irreversibly devalued the temporal world by reducing the historical to a mere "occasion" for truth. [PF 60] The Christian must, as Mooney explains, renounce 'claims' to the finite without renouncing 'care' for the finite. [108-109] For a more thorough refutation of Kierkegaard's alleged acosmism, see Keeley 96-108.

<sup>450</sup> JP III 321 [1850].

<sup>451</sup> WL 24.

<sup>452</sup> JP IV 49-52 [1840-1841]. See also BA 212, where he declared that, "the divine inhabits and finds its task in the finite." In UD 259, he denounced existential escapism as "not the expectancy of the eternal but a superstitious belief in the future."

<sup>453</sup> BA 38.

<sup>454</sup> TM 630 n. 1. Climacus explicitly connected the "moment" and Christ by referring to Galatians 4:4: "Let

spirit.<sup>455</sup> "A human being is a synthesis of the infinite and the finite, of the temporal and the eternal, of freedom and necessity."<sup>456</sup> Hence, in "Two 'Notes' Concerning My Work as an Author", Kierkegaard stated, "[T]o be a human being is to have kinship with the divine."<sup>457</sup> Moreover, the central paradox of the Incarnation supremely grounds and upholds the temporal universe in the unwavering love of God whereby, "[E]very Christian is Christian only by being nailed to the paradox of having based his eternal happiness on the relation to something historical."<sup>458</sup> Thus, according to Kierkegaard, genuine faith validates temporality-- it does not vitiate it.<sup>459</sup>

The limitations of this dichotomous structure also pertain to the division between 'sensate' and 'spiritual' authority in the following chapter.<sup>460</sup> I have chosen the term 'sensate' to denote any human authority-- whether intellectual, moral, or political-- which is not self-consciously derived from God for several reasons: it is not an over-used term, it is found in translations of Kierkegaard's writings,<sup>461</sup> and it largely avoids the problematic and/or pejorative connotations of words such as 'natural', 'material', 'classical', 'contingent', 'worldly', 'sensual', 'transitory', 'accidental', or 'secular'.<sup>462</sup> As with every element of temporality for Kierkegaard, sensate authority possesses the potential for a transformational 'renewal' through a restored relationship with God.<sup>463</sup> An obvious limitation of the word is that it may seem to suggest an authority which is merely physical

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us call it: *the fullness of time*." [PF 18]

<sup>455</sup> JP III 338 [1854], CD 141, WL 12, UV 195, CA 85, UD 163.

<sup>456</sup> SD 43. Kierkegaard attributed the human consciousness of time to "the eternal within him", lest a man live "totally in the purely momentary", [CD 77-78; UD 17] and regarded the unity between one's "divine necessity" and "accidental finitude" as "implicit in consciousness, which is the point of departure for personality." [BA 212] Although the human spirit could be "finitized" when lacking inwardness, Vigilius contended, "Inwardness is therefore eternity or the constituent of the eternal in man." [CA 151] Perkins rightly observes that Kierkegaard refused to articulate the 'nature' of a human being: "Each person must, within the context of the given, define himself or herself as the person he/ she is and would be." ["Politics" 35]

<sup>457</sup> PV 106.

<sup>458</sup> UP I 578.

<sup>459</sup> UD 260.

<sup>460</sup> Prof. Trevor Hart has pointed out the problematic nature of associating the 'spiritual' with the 'eternal', since most Christian traditions posit the existence of a 'created order of unseen spiritual realities which are, therefore, contingent upon creation.' I've attempted to address this concern by restricting my usage of 'spiritual' to authority in the realm of human individuals.

<sup>461</sup> For example, TM 460 [1854], PV 48, PC 158, UD 379, 382.

<sup>462</sup> I am particularly indebted to Dr. Michael Partridge for highlighting the terminological difficulties and providing helpful suggestions.

<sup>463</sup> See, for example, BA 150.



in nature. However, 'sensate' is intended to include intellectual and emotional spheres and not only the realm of the physical senses. As long as this qualification is kept in mind, the term will hopefully provide more clarification than consternation. In light of these considerations, I will begin by articulating Kierkegaard's understanding of the eternal before examining his views on the created realm of temporality.

## B. Kierkegaard's Comprehension of the Eternal: The Attributes of God:

### 1. God's Transcendental Otherness:

Kierkegaard outlined one of his fundamental theological premises in a journal entry written in 1851: "I have often pointed out that Christianity can be presented in two ways: either in man's interest (mitigating accommodation) or in God's interest (true Christianity) [...]"<sup>464</sup> Because of the overwhelming 'compromise' of the Danish church, Kierkegaard sought to remain true to Christianity by retaining a theocentric focus. Within his writings, God is not reduced to the sum of several self-contained properties; rather, attributes such as God's goodness, omnibenevolence, and omnipotence remain interconnected and almost 'perichoretic' in relation to one another. As he wrote in *Upbuilding Discourses in Various Spirits*, "Everything that a human being knows about the eternal is contained primarily in this: it is God who rules, because whatever more a person comes to know pertains to *how* God has ruled or rules or will rule."<sup>465</sup> He later described this divine governing as "the rule of God's love", which human beings are not expected to understand although, "[W]e certainly are required to be able to believe and, believing, to understand that he is love."<sup>466</sup> The unfolding of God's communicated identity and expectations of human beings, which culminate in the Incarnation, is an essential manifestation of God's rule: "Christianity is an *existence-communication*, brought into the world by the use of *authority*."<sup>467</sup>

If Kierkegaard's theological foundation could be encapsulated in a single phrase, a

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<sup>464</sup> JP IV 457 [1851].

<sup>465</sup> UV 258.

<sup>466</sup> UV 268.

<sup>467</sup> JP I 75 [1849].

likely candidate would be Athanasius' pithy response to Arianism-- "God is not as man."<sup>468</sup> Climacus echoed this sentiment by contending, "[I]f a human being is to come truly to know something about the unknown (the god), he must first come to know that it is different from him, absolutely different from him."<sup>469</sup> It is fallacious to extend human concepts of existence to God for, as Climacus contended, "God does not exist, he is eternal."<sup>470</sup> Without God's expressed self-communication, God would remain forever incomprehensible to human reason; therefore, Kierkegaard insisted that revelation must be approached on its own terms. While criticizing 'aesthetic' and 'ethical' approaches to Christianity which inevitably dismiss the revelatory aspect, he declared: "A revelation-fact is, in qualitative dialectic, essentially different from everything else and in a qualitative dialectical sense essentially belongs in the essentially religious sphere, the paradoxical-religious."<sup>471</sup>

If God were merely a 'passive', incomprehensible object for human knowledge, agnosticism would be justified; however, Kierkegaard believed that humankind is facing a God who is "pure subjectivity",<sup>472</sup> who personally ensures that an accurate self-portrayal is transmitted.<sup>473</sup> Human subjectivity is, therefore, not an isolated phenomenon for Kierkegaard, but a participation in the ultimate subjectivity of God: "It is perfectly true, isolated subjectivity is, in the opinion of the ages, evil; but 'objectivity' as a cure is not one whit better. The only salvation is subjectivity, *i.e.*, God, as infinite compelling subjectivity."<sup>474</sup> Thus, to present Christianity as "a sum of doctrines" which has no direct

<sup>468</sup> Athanasius 90.

<sup>469</sup> PF 46.

<sup>470</sup> UP I 332. Climacus posited that human understanding works only where possibility is higher than actuality, whereas actuality eclipses possibility in Christianity, thereby incapacitating human reason. [UP I 580] In PF 74, Climacus argued that God is "necessary" and, therefore, cannot come into being because he simply is.

<sup>471</sup> BA 20.

<sup>472</sup> JP III 345 [1854].

<sup>473</sup> PF 42.

<sup>474</sup> JK 184 [1850]. It is important to emphasize that Kierkegaard is not questioning the 'objective' veracity of the Christian faith with the concept of 'subjectivity' [contra Hamilton 65]. The former is taken on trust rather than human rationalization: "It is Christ's personal authority, attested by his heterogeneity with fallen human nature, and manifested in his maieutic method of communication, that certifies (even if it does not demonstrate with rational certainty) the objective validity of the Christian world-and-life-view [...]" [Aiken 25] Aiken helpfully suggests that "objective truth, subjectively appropriated" is a better understanding than the "potentially misleading Climacan maxim 'Truth is subjectivity'." [28] See also Evans *Fragments* 211, 255-256, Schönbaumsfeld 528, and Whittaker 86. I would want to qualify carefully Perkins' statement that,

bearing on the lives of the listeners was, for Kierkegaard, tantamount to paganism.<sup>475</sup> However, humankind is without excuse, and Kierkegaard once maintained that genuine atheism-- at least within the ranks of Christendom-- does not exist due to the efficaciousness of divine revelation.<sup>476</sup> He insisted, however, that God's power remains inexplicable and largely unnoticed according to human standards of power, since Kierkegaard identified "inferior externality and interior divine power as the characteristic mark of the divine, whereas paganism is interior emptiness supported by external ostentation."<sup>477</sup> On account of human sinfulness and the contemporary prevalence of the 'aesthetic fallacy', which measures internal realities based on external appearances,<sup>478</sup> Kierkegaard averred: "This is Christianity's view: what is eternal, what is true, cannot possibly win the approval of the moment, must inevitably win its disapproval."<sup>479</sup>

## 2. God's Utter Incontestability:

God's transcendental otherness, which remains incomprehensible to human reason apart from faith, is conjoined to the utter incontestability of God's rule. On account of God's uniqueness, God has no equals to either rival or assist him. Because the power of God cannot be contested, Kierkegaard believed that there is no need for God to respond immediately to human rebellion: rather, God waits, having all of the time in the world at his disposal.<sup>480</sup> In an upbuilding discourse, Kierkegaard carefully explained that speaking of

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"the objective validity of our subjective beliefs is and remains unknown, though they do make behavioral differences in the world" [Perkins "Habermas" 485], lest Kierkegaard's 'subjectivity' appear to endorse moral relativism or religious pluralism. The existential 'certainty' of the love of God, the authority of the Bible, and the historical particularity of Christ upon which the believer's 'eternal happiness' is based seem to counter "the epistemic groundlessness of a person's religious belief". [Perkins "Habermas" 486] I believe that Kierkegaard would agree with Volf's assertion: "[T]here are values which 'time and change' cannot alter because 'time and change' did not bring them about." [68] While endorsing Perkins' recognition of the Kierkegaardian theme that human formulations of truth are always provisional, I don't think that "authoritarian dogma" is more problematic for Kierkegaard than the disparity between 'espoused beliefs' and daily practice.

<sup>475</sup> CD 214-215. See also PV 228.

<sup>476</sup> JP III 662 [1844]: "[J]ust as no one has ever proved it [God's existence], so has there never been an atheist, even though there certainly have been many who have been unwilling to let what they knew (that the God exists) get control of their minds."

<sup>477</sup> JP IV 458 [1851].

<sup>478</sup> WL 305.

<sup>479</sup> CD 227. Climacus stated that only God "possesses the medium that is the commensurability of the outer and the inner. But the human mind cannot see world history in this way." [UP I 141]

<sup>480</sup> TM 274. On God's slowness to judge, see TM 304-305, UV 16. Kierkegaard's principle of divine

God's 'victory' over anything is misleading, since the invincibility of God's rule does not mean that God defeats all challengers and threats, but rather that nothing is even capable of challenging or threatening God: "God's omnipotence and holiness do not mean that he can be victorious over everyone, that he is the strongest, for this is still a comparison; but it means, and this bars any comparison, that no one can manage to fight with him."<sup>481</sup> Hence, God can never fight fair-- he's simply too darn big!

According to Kierkegaard, this divine unthwartability encompasses everything that transpires in the cosmos. The problem with 'the problem of evil' challenges is that they fail to recognize "the differentiation that God accomplishes the good and merely permits the evil".<sup>482</sup> Divine providence remains undaunted by the most heinous acts, able to incorporate the gravest misfortunes within its incontrovertible scope of love. Subsequently, Kierkegaard once proclaimed, "[U]ltimately everything must be ascribed to God if there is to be a God and a godly view of life."<sup>483</sup> This conviction remains consistent throughout the journal entries in which he comes to terms with suffering and tragedy in his own life.<sup>484</sup> Reflecting upon a personal error, he once wrote: "[I]t was still your governance which permitted it to happen and promptly and lovingly lifted it up into your fatherly purpose for me, lovingly disposing of the millions of possibilities so that even the mistake would become truly useful to me."<sup>485</sup>

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incontestability informed his view of hell: because only suffering for the truth can be 'recollected eternally', hell is not a dungeon of divine vengeance, but a state of 'eternal torment of emptiness' "by the painful thought that your life was wasted, filled with what cannot be recollected eternally!" [TM 298] Kodalle posits, "The new Kierkegaardian way of thinking and the freedom that comes with it leave the traditional view of God behind, that is, God as an omnipotent being ruling in the mode of domination." [400]

<sup>481</sup> UV 286. God's 'victory' does not transpire in time but is trans-chronologically rooted in eternity.

Subsequently, Kierkegaard praised "the blessed assurance that comforts beyond all measure-- that eternally the good has always won the victory". [UV 63]. See also BA 225. For a fascinating survey of the elision of divine and human power in medieval and renaissance thought, see Oakley 444-447.

<sup>482</sup> TM 390 [1846].

<sup>483</sup> UD 386.

<sup>484</sup> Hence, "Governance" employed depression and "a troubled conscience" to 'hold me in rein', [CD 421 (1848)] in addition to expanding biographical incidentals into significant principles such as "that single individual"-- originally a reference to Regine Olsen. [WA xviii] Events such as publication pressures, anxiety over authorship, and the death of Regine's father were regarded as 'hints from Governance.' [PV 226 (1849)]

<sup>485</sup> JP III 575 [1850]. His views had changed substantially from early entries where he regarded the deaths of



### 3. God's Omnibenevolence:

If God was characterized only by sheer otherness and utter incontestability, the universe would be little more than one tyrannical system in which human free will was a mere illusion. At times, Kierkegaard seems to subscribe to such a view. For example, in his interpretation of Matthew 6:24, "No one can serve two masters [...]", he concluded that a person serves God no matter which choice one makes, so one might as well serve God willingly.<sup>486</sup> A similar strand of 'Christian fatalism' occurs in *Without Authority*: "God's will is still done anyhow; so strive to make a virtue of necessity by unconditionally obediently doing God's will."<sup>487</sup> However, Kierkegaard asserted that God's rule, incontestable and beyond the grasp of human rationality or manipulation, is simultaneously characterized by his omnibenevolence: "God is pure subjectivity and in love it pleases God to be concerned about man."<sup>488</sup> Because God is transcendent and omnipotent, God lacks nothing. Hence, Climacus concluded, "But if he moves himself and is not moved by need, what moves him then but love, for love does not have the satisfaction of need outside itself but within."<sup>489</sup> Anti-Climacus defined "divine compassion" as, "the unlimited *recklessness* in concerning oneself only with the suffering, not in the least with oneself, and of unconditionally recklessly concerning oneself with *each* sufferer".<sup>490</sup> God's compassion is itself indefatigable, based upon "the omnipotence with which God the omnipotent One bears all your sorrow lightly as nothing".<sup>491</sup>

The doctrine that God is love was indispensable to Kierkegaard, who once declared that, should anyone observe a single event "that is incompatible with the idea that God is love", it would constitute sufficient proof that God doesn't exist, "for if God is not love, and if he is not love in everything, then God does not exist at all."<sup>492</sup> God's love is not only evident in the universe he has created, but also in the fact that he remains a self-giving God.

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his mother and sister as "the punishment of God". [JK 39 (1835)]

<sup>486</sup> CD 83. See also WA 197 [1847].

<sup>487</sup> WA 30.

<sup>488</sup> JP III 345 [1854].

<sup>489</sup> PF 24.

<sup>490</sup> PC 58.

<sup>491</sup> WA 43.

<sup>492</sup> UV 267. He added: "But no human being would be able to endure this horror [...]" [UV 270]

This applies to the Incarnation, as well as to the ongoing work of the Holy Spirit, whose promptings constitute "God's gifts in a far deeper sense than food and clothing, not only because it is God who gives them but because God gives himself in these gifts!"<sup>493</sup>

#### 4. God's Constancy:

The final attribute of God which is prominent in Kierkegaard's writings forms the crux of his favourite passage of scripture, James 1:17-21: God never changes.<sup>494</sup> Despite the suffering which God brings upon himself in his intimate involvement with a 'fallen' creation characterized by misused freedom, Kierkegaard comforted those who suffered for the truth: "[B]e assured that in love God suffers more than you are suffering, but he cannot be changed by that."<sup>495</sup> Accordingly, he once described "divine fatherly love" as "the one single unshakable thing in life, the true Archimedean point."<sup>496</sup> Because of his extreme otherness, utter incontestability, unshakable love, and immutability, God's ability to will the good for temporality and his ability to accomplish that will remain intrinsically interconnected and ultimately unthwartable. Having briefly outlined Kierkegaard's understanding of the eternal, it is necessary to examine his views of the universe which God has created.

### C. Kierkegaard's Comprehension of the Temporal: The Limitations of Actuality:

#### 1. Contingent Knowledge of God:

In contrast to the otherness, incontestability, omnibenevolence, and immutability of God, the temporal universe-- everything that exists, i.e., was created by God-- is characterized by contingency and limitation. It is primarily limited in acquiring true and

<sup>493</sup> CD 253.

<sup>494</sup> TM 268, CI 476 n. 70. Although Kierkegaard never systematically expounded the doctrine of the Trinity, Climacus alluded to it in his ruminations of existence, necessity, and divine immutability. To summarize, all existing matter is possible but not necessary-- contra Aristotle-- since the necessary must always have been, otherwise it isn't truly 'necessary'. In light of its complete independence from existence and role as "free acting cause", [PF 75] Climacus stated: "[I]t is constantly related to itself and is related to itself in the same way and excludes all change." [PF 77]

<sup>495</sup> TM 295.

complete knowledge of who God is. Kierkegaard adamantly maintained that God is clearly beyond the ordinary purview of human rationality and thinkability.<sup>497</sup> Hence, in a journal entry on God's creative power, he marvelled, "It is incomprehensible that omnipotence is able not only to create the most impressive of all things-- the whole visible world-- but is able to create the most frail of all things-- a being independent of that very omnipotence."<sup>498</sup> Without God's personal self-disclosure, humankind would remain trapped within mythological constructions and projections. According to the Danish thinker, erroneous interpretations of God's transcendence take two contrary forms: either, God is held 'too close' by a religiousness of immanence and thereby encased within the temporal order of creation and made subject to its laws and bounds; or, God is held 'too distant', whereby people fail to recognize God's intimate interactions with creation. Hence, he maintained, "[T]he eternal is the dominant, which does not want to have its time but wants to make time *its own* and then permits the temporal also to have its time."<sup>499</sup>

It is tempting to conjecture on Kierkegaard's attitude towards natural revelation. He clearly believed that creation displays the beauty and handicraft of God. Thus, while explaining the *imago Dei*, he stated: "The upright gait is the sign of distinction, but to be able to prostrate oneself in adoration and worship is even more glorious; and all nature is like the great staff of servants who remind the human being, the ruler, about worshiping God."<sup>500</sup> However, such praise likely arises after recognition of and reconciliation with God's primary revelation-- the life and person of Jesus Christ.<sup>501</sup> Hence, the pagan mistakenly strove to emulate the divine by ruling rather than by humble adoration: "To worship is not to rule, and yet worship is what makes the human being resemble God, and to be able truly to worship is the excellence of the invisible glory above all creation. The pagan was not aware of God and therefore sought likeness in ruling."<sup>502</sup>

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<sup>496</sup> TM xii.

<sup>497</sup> The natural outcome of the encounter between unregenerate humanity and God is, therefore, offence. See PC 75-144. For parallels with Hume's limitation of reason to categories outside of faith, see Gardiner *Introduction* 81.

<sup>498</sup> WL [revised] 405 [1846].

<sup>499</sup> UV 11.

<sup>500</sup> UV 193.

<sup>501</sup> Kierkegaard also believed that God's will is explicitly revealed "in Holy Scripture and in my conscience." [JK 203 (1850)]

<sup>502</sup> UV 193.

Due to Kierkegaard's aversion to Hegelian 'quantification'-- the assimilation of the eternal within temporal formulations-- he adamantly attacked the view that Christian faith is merely one stage in the unfolding evolution of humankind which must be superseded by a higher stage of development.<sup>503</sup> Christian faith entails the 'collision' whereby the temporal encounters the eternal on its own terms. Hence, Kierkegaard had little tolerance for religions of 'immanence': "Temporality, as it is knowable, cannot be the transparency of the eternal; in its given actuality, it is the *refraction* of the eternal."<sup>504</sup> He denied the efficacy of any human-made artifice-- whether physical or intellectual-- to communicate God directly to any individual.<sup>505</sup> Thus, Climacus ironically observed:

No anonymous author can more slyly hide himself, and no maieutic can more carefully recede from a direct relation than God can. He is in the creation, everywhere in the creation, but he is not there directly, and only when the single individual turns inwards into himself [...] does he become aware and capable of seeing God.<sup>506</sup>

## 2. Redeeming the Fallen Realm:

In stark contrast to the immutability of the eternal, temporality is characterized by its intrinsic changeability and susceptibility to corruption.<sup>507</sup> Subsequently, Kierkegaard believed that clinging to the uncertain is tantamount to insanity,<sup>508</sup> for, "[O]nly the eternal can be gained eternally."<sup>509</sup> At the same time, however, temporality is bound to God's loving purposes and "God's plan of existence-- that time is purely and simply

<sup>503</sup> UP I 291-294. The incommensurability of Christianity with human development is deeply connected to the paradoxical nature of the eternal entering the temporal in the Incarnation. See BA 175: "The apostle has something paradoxically new to bring, the newness of which, just because it is essentially paradoxical and not an anticipation pertaining to the development of the human race, continually remains [...]"

<sup>504</sup> UV 90.

<sup>505</sup> WL [revised] 409 [January 1847].

<sup>506</sup> UP I 243. He continued: "The direct relationship with God is simply paganism, and only when the break has taken place, only then can there be a true God-relationship." Kierkegaard owed much of his emphasis on 'indirect communication' to Socrates' 'maieutic' relation to his pupils. See UP I 247.

<sup>507</sup> WA 40. Kierkegaard's famous image of 'floating out upon the depths of 7,000 fathoms of water' expressed "how uncertain everything is." [CD 255]

<sup>508</sup> CD 256.

<sup>509</sup> CD 137.



development, prior complication, and eternity the solution."<sup>510</sup> Even political events, such as war and revolution, are incorporated within God's indefatigable plan for temporality. Hence, in reflecting upon the tumultuous events of 1848, he contended: "And when the preliminary, the convulsive seizure, has run its course, the human race will be so exhausted from sufferings and loss of blood that this matter of eternity might at least be allowed to receive consideration."<sup>511</sup> Although Vigilius contended that it is the nature of "the demonic" to fear the irrevocable annihilation of the temporal by the eternal, he insisted: "In eternity [...] all contradiction is cancelled, the temporal is permeated by and preserved in the eternal [...]"<sup>512</sup> Just as the 'lower' spheres of existence-- the aesthetic, ethical, and Religiousness A-- are not negated as in Hegelian 'mediation',<sup>513</sup> but swept up in an 'Elijan' whirlwind of fire and transfigured into something higher by Religiousness B,<sup>514</sup> likewise the temporal is not discarded but transformed into perfection.<sup>515</sup> In order to investigate the implications of sin and redemption more closely, the argument will now focus on Kierkegaard's understanding of humanity.

<sup>510</sup> WL 236.

<sup>511</sup> BA 232 [October 1848].

<sup>512</sup> CA 154.

<sup>513</sup> EO I 478 [1837]: "Hegel's subsequent position swallows up the previous one, not as one stage of life swallows another, with each still retaining its validity, but as a higher title or rank swallows up a lower title." Gardiner argues that the 'transfiguration' of the aesthetic stage to the ethical is 'Hegelian in tone', [Introduction 52] and ponders whether "there is anything that could not, with a little ingenuity, be interpreted as 'living aesthetically'". [51] Norris points to the use of aesthetic strategies (e.g., narrative fictionalizing of the past to justify Kierkegaard's broken engagement) by the 'religious' perspective of *Point of View* as proof of overlap in the stages. [94-96] Since the higher stages both embody and perfect the lower, there will naturally be commonalities.

<sup>514</sup> See Gardiner *Introduction* 67: "While the importance of moral requirements is not as such denied, the absolute sovereignty of the ethical can no longer be assumed [...]" Hong shares this interpretation in WL [revised] 316 n. 40: "The becoming of the person, or 'stages on life's way,' thereby involves 'cutting the tap roots' of the esthetic, the ethical, and the immanent religious, but not abrogating them, and in the life of faith catching them up in 'spontaneity after reflection.'" Dooley rightly interprets the 'teleological suspension of the ethical'-- contra Levinas-- as an unwavering pronouncement of the provisional, contingent, and fallible nature of human laws and government. [xviii] See also Westphal "Abraham" 77, where he argues that the teleological suspension of the ethical is directed against Hegel's concept of 'ethical life'. [Stitlichkeit] Quinn observes that the Christian ethics of 'commanded love of neighbour' and 'required imitation of Christ' "are likely to look harsh and inhuman if viewed from outside a Christian worldview or if recourse to grace is disallowed. [374]

<sup>515</sup> See, for example, BA 21, where Kierkegaard contended that the ethical requirement defends the religious sphere against the aesthetic sphere's attempts to reduce it to 'art': "The religious sphere includes or ought to include the ethical [...]" In speaking of love versus faith and hope, he wrote: "[T]he greatest must be able to undertake the business of the lesser ones (if I may put it this way) and makes them more perfect." [WL 213] On the need for sexuality to be "transfigured" rather than nullified or repressed, see CA 80. See also CA 70, where the ethical is not nullified but "receives a completely different expression", and EO I 205 where Mr. A describes Faust as a later 'reproduction' or 'stage' of Don Juan: "[T]o reproduce another stage does not mean only to become that but to become that with all the elements of the preceding stage in it."

## II. The Anthropological Tier:

### A. The Universal: Abortion of Selfhood Through Collectivity:

#### 1. The Gift of Free Will:

Within the glorious cosmos which God has freely created, humankind occupies a unique and privileged position. For Kierkegaard, one of the greatest expressions of God's love-- and equally expressive of God's supreme otherness and utter incontestability-- is human freedom: "The greatest good, after all, that can be done for a being [...] is to make it free. In order to do just that, omnipotence is required."<sup>516</sup> Contrary to many philosophical and theological disputations of the inherent contradictions between divine and human freedom, Kierkegaard believed that the existence of human free will is a miracle created and perpetually sustained by the omnipotent love and creative liberty of God:

[I]f a human being had the slightest independent existence over against God (with regard to *materia*), then God could not make him free. Creation out of nothing is once again the Omnipotent One's expression for being able to make [a being] independent. He to whom I owe absolutely everything, although he still absolutely controls everything, has in fact made me independent.<sup>517</sup>

He contended that true independence can only be given by one who can completely remove all vestiges of obligation and dependency from the recipient.<sup>518</sup> Subsequently, the gift of liberty cannot represent a loss of liberty on the part of the giver, otherwise, Kierkegaard argued, the recipient will be bound by the gift and not truly liberated: "If in creating men God himself lost a little of his power, then precisely what he could not do would be to make a human being independent."<sup>519</sup>

<sup>516</sup> TM 390 [1846].

<sup>517</sup> TM 390-391 [1846].

<sup>518</sup> TM 391 [1846]: "God's omnipotence is therefore his goodness. For goodness is to give oneself away completely, but in such a way that by omnipotently taking oneself back makes the recipient independent." This presumably would be Kierkegaard's response to the dilemma of gift-giving raised in John Milbank's seminal essay, "Can a Gift Be Given?"

<sup>519</sup> TM 390-391 [1846]. Creation *ex nihilo* becomes a vital doctrine for Kierkegaard, underscoring the qualitative difference between temporal and divine power and creativity: "A human being cannot bear to have his 'creations' be something in relation to himself; they are supposed to be nothing; and therefore he calls them, and with disdain, 'creations'. But God, who creates from nothing, omnipotently takes from nothing and says, 'Become'; he lovingly adds, 'Become something even in relation to me'. What wonderful love; even his omnipotence is in the power of love." [CD 127]

The gift of true independence requires great subtlety. In *Works of Love*, Kierkegaard claimed: "[T]he greatest benefaction cannot be accomplished in any way whereby the recipient gets to know that he is indebted."<sup>520</sup> If someone argues that man has nevertheless become 'indebted' to God for his freedom, Kierkegaard might respond that God hasn't lost or gained anything from his gift and, therefore, there is neither a genuine debt nor a 'contractual' obligation for repaying an 'impossible' because eternal gift. On account of God's utter incontestability and limitless power, only God can truly liberate a living being:

All finite power makes dependent; only omnipotence can make independent, can form from nothing something that has its continuity in itself through the continuous withdrawing of omnipotence. Omnipotence is not ensconced in a relationship to another, for there is no other to which it is comparable-- no, it can give without giving up the least of its power, that is, it can make independent.<sup>521</sup>

This suggests that, for Kierkegaard, true power is represented by the ability to empower another without enslaving that person to either the giver or to the gift-- a task accomplishable only by omnipotence. Contrary to conventional wisdom, Kierkegaard contended that it is only through willingly relinquishing the temporal that a person truly gains both the temporal and the eternal,<sup>522</sup> an act made possible only by grace: "Only with the help of the eternal is a person able to let go of the lost temporal thing in such a way that he loses it only temporally. If the eternal does not help, then he loses much more than the temporal."<sup>523</sup> Michael Matthis lucidly explains that the Christian attains true selfhood before God, which is unavailable to the aesthetic or ethical 'self', each of which,

seeks to simplify the complexity of selfhood and find a solution within immanence to the problem of selfhood that the religious self faces in going beyond the immanent, i.e., beyond the control of its own powers, that problem being the reconciliation of the total freedom that selfhood demands and the fact of otherness without which that freedom becomes a mirage, a mere play of

<sup>520</sup> WL 256.

<sup>521</sup> TM 391 [1846]. See also UP I 260, where Climacus stated: "[N]o one is as resigned as God, because he communicates creatively in such a way that in creating he gives independence vis à vis himself." Constantin endorsed this view in his critique of Hegelian mediation: whereas immanence cannot contain true movement on account of its self-referential nature, freedom "always emerges-- by virtue not of an immanence but of a transcendence." [FT 308] Pattison argues that, "the impossibility of being absorbed into or by the other, or of absorbing the other into myself, is a key element in his anthropological starting-point." [161]

<sup>522</sup> CD 134, 143.

<sup>523</sup> CD 142.

fantasy.<sup>524</sup>

Subsequently, before a truly omnipotent God, the individual's freedom is recognized and ratified by an Other who can neither threaten nor be threatened by this freedom.

God's loving omnipotence is not merely required to create 'independent' humanity *ex nihilo*, since Kierkegaard believed that God's omnipotence is constantly required to prevent creation from being overwhelmed by his abundance.<sup>525</sup> Divine power is as much a 'holding back'<sup>526</sup> as a holding forth,<sup>527</sup> since true power need not be "conspicuous" in its deportment.<sup>528</sup> As Judge William explained,

[T]here are different ways of measuring strength. When Holger Danske squeezes sweat out of an iron glove, that is strength, but if he were handed a butterfly, I am afraid that he would not have sufficient strength to take it properly. To mention a sublime example, God's omnipotence appears great in having created everything, but does it not appear equally great in the omnipotent moderation that can permit a blade of grass to grow its season.<sup>529</sup>

Hence, in God's continuous interaction with humanity, God's compassion is expressed by the refusal to impede the freedom of his creations through either the blatant use of his

<sup>524</sup> Matthis 422. He continues: "[U]nless the self surrenders its pretensions to sufficiency, first annihilates itself and then comes into being through the absolute other, then the self is not truly free, but is merely determined by immanent factors within the self." [425] Matthis argues that Kierkegaard's model fails, however, by dismissing the [finite] "social other as an obstacle along the path to full development". [428-429] He surmises: "[I]f the social other poses such an obstacle to the self's freedom that Kierkegaard eliminates such an other from contact at the soul's center, how much greater must the obstacle be to the self's freedom when that other is itself absolute and all-powerful?" [429-430] Matthis' analysis appears valid in lieu of many statements in which Kierkegaard delimits human relationships. However, *Works of Love* certainly argues for more than an 'instrumental' attention to the social other, and Christians are under direct orders to 'love thy neighbour' from the highest of authorities. Matthis himself cites WL 253: "[T]o have individuality is to believe in the individuality of every other person; for individuality is not mine but is God's gift by which he gives me being and gives being to all." [436] From the perspective of sinfully autonomous humankind, God must indeed constitute the ultimate 'threat', since such a person is blind to the incommensurability between God and humanity which Kierkegaard insists upon. For the Christian, however, it does not follow that, if humans are a threat to the self's freedom, then God must be even more so, since God's power is qualitatively different.

<sup>525</sup> Jürgen Moltmann develops a similar view of divine self-limitation, building upon Isaac Luria's doctrine of *zimzum*. See Moltmann *God* 86-88, and *Trinity* 108-111.

<sup>526</sup> Kodalle 400.

<sup>527</sup> Matthis argues that this is not a violation of the principle of contradiction, "since it occurs at the level of the transcendent". [431]

<sup>528</sup> SW 144.

<sup>529</sup> SW 144. See also WA 42: "God the Omnipotent One carries the whole world and all its sorrow [...] with extreme lightness."



power,<sup>530</sup> or an oppressive-- because overwhelming-- divine disclosure. Thus, Kierkegaard wrote, "[I]n your goodness you conceal yourself from him [man], and your omnipotence makes it impossible for him to see you, since in that case he himself would become nothing!"<sup>531</sup>

It would be somewhat of a misnomer to label Kierkegaard's position as 'kenotic', given that God's 'holding back' is, paradoxically, an invisible display of his unwavering omnipotence!<sup>532</sup> What then seems 'powerless' from the perspective of temporality is, in fact, the full and radical entrance of God in time. In addition to the gift of liberty itself, lovingly bestowed from freedom for freedom, Kierkegaard believed that human free will receives a second inestimable honour-- God deigns to render himself an object of human choice: "Do you know any more overwhelming and humbling manifestation of God's complaisance and indulgence toward human beings than that in a sense he places himself on the straight line of choice with the world just in order that the human being can choose [...]"<sup>533</sup>

For Kierkegaard, the major implications of this divine 'self-restraint' in light of human independence are two-fold. First, in permitting his creations to choose to reject him, God makes himself vulnerable to suffering. This vicissitude is eloquently illustrated in Climacus' parable of the love-struck king, who seeks to woo a peasant maiden without overwhelming her by his grandeur: "Who grasps the contradiction of this sorrow: not to disclose itself is the death of love; to disclose itself is the death of the beloved."<sup>534</sup>

<sup>530</sup> UV 62.

<sup>531</sup> UD 310. See also PF 26-30.

<sup>532</sup> For an interesting discussion on the 'kenotic nature' of grace as a commonality between Arminius and Kierkegaard, see Jackson 235-256. The impression of God's literally having to 'shove over' to make room for human freedom seemingly implies a commensurability between divine power/ freedom and human power/ freedom, which would be untenable from a Kierkegaardian perspective. Hence, I believe Kierkegaard would have agreed with Bonhoeffer's assessment: "[T]he doctrine of kenosis tried to reduce the claims of the divine nature until ultimately divine and human nature would fit together." [Bonhoeffer 97] God's otherness must be an 'other' otherness from human 'otherness'. Hence, I strongly disagree with Golomb's suggestion of 'imputed transcendence': "Kierkegaard maximizes the distinction between man and God to make religious faith the most authentic authoritative experience imaginable. The gap between God and man is infinite because it was man who made it so." ["Ladder" 79]

<sup>533</sup> UV 206. This accounts for the eternal peril of choosing not to choose God or avoiding the choice altogether. [UV 207]

<sup>534</sup> PF 30.



Climacus then pressed his point concerning human illusions of power: "The human mind so often aspires to might and power, and in its constant preoccupation with this thought, as if achieving it would transfigure everything, it does not suspect that there is not only joy in heaven but sorrow also [...]"<sup>535</sup> Second, it also indicates that there is a dialectic at work between human and divine freedom. In *Works of Love*, the author observed that, "everything which shall be kept alive must be kept in its element. But love's element is infinitude [...]"<sup>536</sup> In order for human love to be sustained, it must exist within the bounds of divine love. Similarly, one might argue that, in order for human freedom to be sustained, it must flourish within the confluence and effluence of God's freedom.<sup>537</sup>

## 2. 'Crowding Out' God: Sin as Revaluation:

Unfortunately, humankind chose to misuse its freedom in order to pursue a sinful autonomy from God, a travesty of truth which persists, with ever evolving cunning, to the present. Commenting on the widespread indolence inherent in a cost-free 'grace', Kierkegaard wrote: "Man thinks he will have the easiest time of all when there is no God at all-- then man can play the lord. After that God becomes at most a handsome ornament, a luxury item-- for there is no duty toward God."<sup>538</sup> One of the most important results of human rebellion for Kierkegaard is the intentional loss of individual identity before God by conglomeration en masse, fostered by fear of "the risky odyssey of becoming a self".<sup>539</sup> He maintained, "The same people, who as individuals are able to will the good in truth, are immediately corrupted as soon as they unite and become many [...]"<sup>540</sup> In a criticism of

<sup>535</sup> PF 30.

<sup>536</sup> WL 176.

<sup>537</sup> Rumble argues, "Kierkegaard's Romantic leanings are evident in his emphasis on the choice of the self and the free appropriation of every influence foreign to the subject." [84] However, this crucial dialectical interplay distances Kierkegaard from Romantic proclivities, which reduce God to merely another source of human fulfillment. As well, Rumble bases much of her analysis on Kierkegaard's earlier pseudonyms, whose attempts to 'reclaim finitude' amount to "yet another attempt to be God, enveloping finitude within an infinite subjectivity and thereby drawing its sting." [93] Kierkegaard claims that these aesthetic productions were always part of a larger religious project, whereas Rumble suggests that, once he reached the age of 34 against his father's prediction, "the urgency of Kierkegaard's attempt to subsume all powers separate from his own will may have subsided." [101]

<sup>538</sup> Cited in Westphal "Sociology" 145. See also Rumble 84-85.

<sup>539</sup> Kodalle 405. Kodalle posits that collectivization is also motivated by "the dynamic structure of our rationality with its virtually inherent tendency to dominate."

<sup>540</sup> UV 96. See also WA 76, WL [revised] 404 [1846], EO I 31.

Bernard of Clairvaux's crusade-rousing orations, Kierkegaard declared: "[T]his is working in the direction of the animal-category, to work men together into-- a crowd."<sup>541</sup> When humans 'band' together, rebellion rises, God is forgotten,<sup>542</sup> and a Babel-like assault upon the 'heavens' is inevitable. Thus, Anti-Climacus stated:

Once people are allowed to merge in what Aristotle terms the animal category-- the crowd, then this abstraction (instead of being less than nothing, less than the least significant individual human being) becomes regarded as some thing. And then it isn't long before this abstraction becomes God.<sup>543</sup>

In Kierkegaard's writings, the crowd represents both the epitome of conformity and the demise of the particular, "the degradation to copies".<sup>544</sup> He did not, however, condemn all forms of congregation,<sup>545</sup> but merely those associations which elevate the worth of the crowd over the worth of the individual, a reversion to "the old paganism" wherein the particular is reduced to mere specimens of the general race or species.<sup>546</sup> Hence, the danger of the crowd lies specifically in its ability to thwart individual selfhood. Within this context, "Kierkegaard seeks to un-socialize the individual in order to un-deify society."<sup>547</sup> According to Anti-Climacus, the human being is a synthesis of the finite (which 'combines') and the infinite (which 'expands'). If the infinite is allowed to expand without being called back to itself, the individual becomes 'fantastic':

When emotion becomes fantastic in this way, the self is simply more and more volatilized and eventually becomes a kind of abstract sensitivity which inhumanly belongs to no human, but which inhumanly participates sensitively, so to speak, in the fate of some abstraction, for example, humanity *in abstracto*.<sup>548</sup>

As a result, the individual loses all particularity and becomes "a cipher, one more person,

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<sup>541</sup> JP IV 219 [1853].

<sup>542</sup> WA 17.

<sup>543</sup> SD 151.

<sup>544</sup> JP III 333 [1854].

<sup>545</sup> In fact, he argued that individuals cannot truly unite without particularity. [TA 91] See also JP I 155 [1848]: "[T]he defect in the life of Christendom [...] is that people [...] live too remote from each other." Perkins suggests that Kierkegaard's view of community is partly informed by Hegel's idealization of ancient Greece: "One suspects, however, that the New Testament view of the church is more important." ["Critique" 213]

<sup>546</sup> PV 107.

<sup>547</sup> Westphal "Politics" 325.

<sup>548</sup> SD 61. While the idealist 'dissipates' the self into abstraction, the determinist "suffocates" the self because, "[I]t is impossible to breathe necessity alone" [SD 70]

one more repetition of this perpetual *Einerlei* [one-and-the-same]."<sup>549</sup> This constitutes the worst sort of despair-- when a person denies her responsibility of having to become a self, a possibility which is actualized only by intentional living in the presence of God.<sup>550</sup>

Kierkegaard contended that only the individual himself could thwart his own selfhood:

People continually think that it is the world, the environment, the circumstances, the situations that stand in one's way, in the way of one's fortune and peace and joy. Basically it is always the person himself who stands in his way, the person himself who is bound up too closely with the world [...] so that he is unable to come to himself, to find rest, to hope.<sup>551</sup>

Contrary to Socrates' belief that truth resides within the immortal soul of man,<sup>552</sup> Kierkegaard posited that animosity 'naturally' arises between humanity and truth. As Climacus indicated, to live in a state of "untruth" entails not being "merely outside the truth" but being fundamentally opposed to the truth.<sup>553</sup> Instead of preoccupying itself with truth, Anti-Climacus claimed: "The world really only interests itself in intellectual or aesthetic limitations, or in the indifferent [...]"<sup>554</sup> Sin, therefore, becomes the ultimate human revaluation, "For worldliness is precisely to ascribe infinite value to the indifferent."<sup>555</sup> Anti-Climacus insisted that any created being which attempts to attain an autonomy independent of the eternal power which establishes it is bound to failure and despair.<sup>556</sup> By attempting to replace God, Kierkegaard claimed that temporality "becomes

<sup>549</sup> SD 63. See also SD 170 n. 22, where the difference between a non-Christian and a "spiritual person" is "like that of a statue to someone living; they are human beings only in appearance, like the elves who are hollow at the back."

<sup>550</sup> SD 64. Anti-Climacus concluded, "Naturally the world has generally no understanding of what is truly horrifying."

<sup>551</sup> CD 109-110.

<sup>552</sup> Climacus scrutinized the Socratic tenet of recollection in PF 9-11. Rumble contends that Climacus has obscured the boundary between the Socratic and the Christian in his attempt to "derive the transcendent from the immanent". Hence, "Climacus remarks with wonder upon the fact that the Christian pole of his thought experiment is already expressed within a human language supposedly too self-loving to have conceived it." [98] Rather, this reflects the hints of higher 'spheres to come' which Kierkegaard worked into the writings, both to prompt the reader to further undertakings as well as to refute any notion that the religious motivation behind his entire authorship was merely a shift towards piety in 'old age'.

<sup>553</sup> PF 15.

<sup>554</sup> SD 63.

<sup>555</sup> SD 63.

<sup>556</sup> SD 99. Anti-Climacus would take issue with interpreters who grant individuals the ability of willing the 'leap' from one existence sphere to another. See, for example, Cutting 84-85 and Cope 557, who examines the difficulties of assigning responsibility to non-leapers if the leap is not volitional. To understand the stages as viable options for the self to choose freely downplays Kierkegaard's insistence upon the self's proclivity for self-escape and self-deception. See Matthis 42. Ferreira helpfully proposes the term "leap to faith" to depict more accurately that the leap is not initiated by the leaper's own faith. [207] See her excellent article:

something by stealing the power of eternity from a person and then in return remains with him and makes him its slave."<sup>557</sup> Subsequently, sin precipitates a catastrophic revaluation whereby 'death'-- a separation from the source of life and freedom, God-- is deemed 'life' and 'life'-- a relationship of intentional submission before God-- is regarded as 'death'.<sup>558</sup>

If individuals are truly living out of a pseudo-self based on this value inversion, any attempt to strip them of this centre of existence will be met with stiff resistance and the generation of offence.<sup>559</sup> Because of the "infinite, qualitative difference between man and God", God must 'disrupt the learner' and radically reconfigure her-- for Kierkegaard, there is literally no room for 'improvement'.<sup>560</sup> As Anti-Climacus averred, "[S]elf-abandonment is the self, and the self is acquired through self-abandonment."<sup>561</sup> Subsequently, Kierkegaard wrote: "[T]o speak merely humanly, God is indeed your mortal enemy. Indeed he wants you to die, to die to the world; he hates specifically that in which you naturally have your life, to which you cling with all your zest for life."<sup>562</sup> The Christian truth demands that one must relinquish personal autonomy in lieu of a life of personal obedience to God and acknowledge one's failure to meet divine expectations for human life, a 'natural' impossibility since, "No human being is able to say, of his own and by himself, what sin is, for sin is the very thing he is in."<sup>563</sup> Hence, Kierkegaard explained: "It is therefore very consistent for Luther to teach that a person must be taught by a revelation concerning how deeply he lies in sin, that the anguished conscience is not a

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M. Jamie Ferreira, "Faith and the Kierkegaardian Leap," in *The Cambridge Companion to Kierkegaard*, ed. Alastair Hannay and Gordon D. Marino (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 207-234.

<sup>557</sup> CD 99.

<sup>558</sup> See, for example, UD 377-- "There is a condition of the struggle that removes every doubt, consequently a condition of the struggle that makes the contender truly joyful and intrepid, and this is the condition: if he loses, then he is victorious."-- and UV 181: "[T]o be dependent on God, completely dependent-- that is independence". Due to the illusions of sin, Kierkegaard contended that, contrary to the claims of Feuerbach and others, temporality-- and not the eternal-- serves as a crutch for the weak. [FS 114]

<sup>559</sup> FS 140: "It is the New Testament's most definite statement-- that Christianity and being a true Christian must to the highest degree be an offence to the natural man, that he must regard Christianity as the greatest treason and the true Christian as the meanest traitor to being a human being [...]" See also PF 49-50.

<sup>560</sup> TM 393 [1847].

<sup>561</sup> SD 81.

<sup>562</sup> TM 177. See also JP III 733 [1851] and FS 177, where he described Christ as the 'ultimate threat' to "that in which we human beings have our lives." Unlike the religion of immanence which constitutes subtle self-reliance through "inward deepening", [UP I 561] the religion of transcendence insists that one "become something else". [BA 113]

<sup>563</sup> SD 127. See also CD 102, UV 285, UP I 585.

natural consequence like being hungry.”<sup>564</sup> From a divine perspective, sinful humankind is living in a self-destructive delusion which must be shattered to facilitate a necessary ‘reformatting’ of our ‘corrupted files’. For Climacus, any attempt at a human solution to sin is as futile as allowing the ‘disease’ to prescribe its own remedy.<sup>565</sup>

### 3. ‘Particular’ Losses:

Kierkegaard presented three major ramifications of the abortion of individual selfhood through ‘over-crowding’. First, the individual loses the ability to consolidate the will and centre one’s focus upon God,<sup>566</sup> seeking instead to hide from God beneath the foliage of abstract collective categories. As Climacus dourly observed, “Because of the jumbling together with the idea of the state, of sociality, of community, and of society, God can no longer catch hold of the single individual.”<sup>567</sup> In a journal entry, Kierkegaard once compared this psychological anonymity of ‘herdism’ to demonic possession:

[T]his demonic lust, a lust to lose oneself in order to evaporate in a potentiation, so that a person is outside of himself, does not really know what he is doing or what he is saying or who it is or what it is speaking through him, while the blood rushes faster, the eyes glitter and stare fixedly, the passions boil, lusts seethe.<sup>568</sup>

Truly there is-- or so the masses insist-- safety in numbers from God’s judicial scrutiny.

The second implication of the loss of self to the crowd is one’s imprisonment within lateral comparisons wherein the true ideal and true community vanish. Instead of holding herself accountable to an unshakable standard, a person justifies her behaviour based on both the underperformance of ‘the others’<sup>569</sup> and the apparent futility of opposing the majority: “[H]ow could one individual be able to stand against the crowd, which has the power!”<sup>570</sup> Hence, Kierkegaard expounded, “[T]he crowd either produces impenitence and irresponsibility or at least weakens the individual’s sense of responsibility by making it

<sup>564</sup> WL [revised] 407 [1846].

<sup>565</sup> UP I 112. This is why ethics must fail, according to Vigilius. [CA 16]

<sup>566</sup> UV 127.

<sup>567</sup> UP I 544.

<sup>568</sup> JP IV 167 [1850].

<sup>569</sup> WL 121, SW 440.

<sup>570</sup> WL [revised] 404 [1846].



a fractional category.”<sup>571</sup> He attributed this tendency to the rise of anthropocentred living: “The more that culture, education, and understanding get the upper hand, the more that people begin to live by way of comparison [...]”<sup>572</sup>

The third result of loss of selfhood through ‘over-crowding’ is increased fear and subsequent thirst for power. Kierkegaard once wrote, “Deep within every man there lies the dread of being alone in the world, forgotten by God, overlooked among the tremendous household of millions upon millions.”<sup>573</sup> He maintained that every person especially fears the true means of gaining the self, the risk of interaction with truth: “[A]nd that is what is human, for truth is related to being ‘spirit’-- and that is very hard for flesh and bone and the physical lust for knowledge to bear. Between man and truth lies mortification-- you see why we are all more or less afraid.”<sup>574</sup> The power craved by the masses, however, is transient, depersonalized, and “cannot be defined humanly but can be more accurately defined as the power of a machine, [...] the power of the crowd is always horse-power.”<sup>575</sup> Ironically, like Nietzsche, Kierkegaard believed that past abuse of power by the nobility had greatly contributed to the rise of populist power: “This, you see, is the result of centuries of fighting against popes and kings and the powers that be, and, on the other hand, regarding the people and the crowd as holy.”<sup>576</sup> Kierkegaard thought that populist movements represent the greatest kind of tyranny, “for how is it possible to get hold of the crowd.”<sup>577</sup> In the wake of the deleterious impact of human sinfulness, it is necessary to examine the divine solution as Kierkegaard perceived it.

#### B. The Particular: The Salvation of the One:

Despite his intense aversion to the false communitarianism which permeated nineteenth-century Europe, Kierkegaard remained hopeful that salvation is possible and

<sup>571</sup> JP III 307-308 [1847-1848].

<sup>572</sup> BA 109.

<sup>573</sup> JK 129 [1847].

<sup>574</sup> JK 202 [1850].

<sup>575</sup> WA 229 [October 1848].

<sup>576</sup> JP IV 141 [1847].

<sup>577</sup> JP IV 141 [1847]. As Westphal observes, “Napoleon has his Waterloo and Nixon his Watergate [...] The amoral herd long survives [...]” [“Politics” 330]

provides effective 'crowd control':

And this is my faith, that however much confusion and evil and contemptibleness there can be in human beings as soon as they become the irresponsible and unrepentant 'public', 'crowd', etc.-- there is just as much truth and goodness and loveliness in them when one can get them as single individuals.<sup>578</sup>

Anti-Climacus inextricably conjoined self-conscious, individual existence with true knowledge of God when he lamented over the man who

never became decisively, eternally, conscious of himself as spirit, as self, or, what is the same, [...] he never became aware-- and gained in the deepest sense the impression-- that there is a God there and that 'he', himself, his self, exists before this God, which infinite gain is never come by except through despair.<sup>579</sup>

Contrary to Hegelian aspirations, Climacus emphasized that, "the task is not to move from the individual to the race, but from the individual through the race (the universal) to reach the individual."<sup>580</sup> Kierkegaard's focus on 'that individual' [*hiin Enkelte*]<sup>581</sup> was not fostered by the atomist tendencies of secular culture, but rather "corresponds to the fact that the truth was in one person, in Christ, in opposition to the whole race".<sup>582</sup> It also reflects the scope of Christ's sacrifice on Calvary: "The sacrifice he offered he did not offer for people in general-- and it cannot be done that way either. No, he sacrificed himself in order

<sup>578</sup> PV 10-11. For this reason, Kierkegaard opposed all 'mass' programs of reform: "[T]he essentially Christian reformation means to turn against the mass, for the essentially Christian reformation means that each person must be reformed, and only then is the most ungodly of all unchristian categories overthrown: the crowd, the public." [JP III 307 (1847)] Cf. Luther's disdain for the 'masses': "[T]he world and the masses are and always will be unchristian, although they are all baptized and are nominally Christian." [*Selections* 371]

<sup>579</sup> SD 57. Kierkegaard even went so far as to deny authentic 'selfhood' to pagans: "The lowly pagan, he is without God in the world and therefore is never essentially himself (which one is only by being before God [...])" [CD 44] He was, however, confident that God provides ample means of salvation for everyone: "That is, the need brings its nourishment along with it [...]" [CD 244] On the prospects of living 'truthfully' though one does not possess the truth, see UV 25, 35; UP I 199; TA 64. I don't believe Kierkegaard intended to fuse God with human subjectivity in the manner which Dooley describes: "For Kierkegaard, therefore, God is not a *what*, or the subject of disinterested objective analysis; God is, rather, a *how*, or a practical and active engagement with others in the world." [18] See also Dooley 85: "God is the guiding ethical idea that acts as a cohesive force between individuals."

<sup>580</sup> UP I 428.

<sup>581</sup> Perkins *Ages* xiii.

<sup>582</sup> JP III 341 [1854]. Kierkegaard's formulation is strongly influenced by Socrates who, he claimed, had used the category of 'single individual' to 'disintegrate paganism' [PV 123] and practiced "closing himself in with himself in order to be expanded in the divine." [CA 134] Even the 'aesthetic' pseudonym Mr. A could distinguish between the ancients' participation in the Greek gods, in which human power is personified in a god and worshiped, and the Incarnation, in which "the full plenitude of life is in the single individual, and this is for the others only through their beholding it in the incarnated individual." [EO I 63]

to save each one individually [...]”<sup>583</sup> Authentic human identity, for Kierkegaard, is thus based upon a ‘relational individualism’-- ‘individual’ because one stands and acts alone before God, but ‘relational’ both in its foundation of ‘relating infinitely to the eternal’,<sup>584</sup> as well as its outworking in non-preferential love towards one’s neighbours.<sup>585</sup> As Kirmmse aptly notes: “Genuine humanity and genuine happiness are in the sphere of religion. In effect then, anthropology is theology.”<sup>586</sup>

Kierkegaard’s understanding of conversion parallels orthodox Christian beliefs in which no quantitative ‘upgrade’ or amelioration takes place, but rather a complete transformation or *metanoia*: “This life-giving in the Spirit is not a *direct* heightening of the natural life in a person in *immediate* continuation from and connection with it [...] it is a new life.”<sup>587</sup> For this reason, a person cannot even perceive the need for renewal prior to receiving the renewal.<sup>588</sup> Due to the universal sinfulness of human beings, Climacus contended, “[T]he teacher, before beginning to teach, must transform, not reform, the learner. But no human is capable of doing this; if it is to take place, it must be done by the god himself.”<sup>589</sup> Anti-Climacus stated that this was only possible through

<sup>583</sup> CD 272.

<sup>584</sup> Rae succinctly states: “There is really no such category as ‘the individual’ in Kierkegaard’s work. It is rather ‘the individual before God’ who is the focus of Kierkegaard’s concern.” [145] See also Brandes 9.

<sup>585</sup> See Perkins “Envy” 116. For a lucid examination of Kierkegaard’s sociology, see Westphal “Sociology” 133-154.

<sup>586</sup> Kirmmse *Golden* 412-413.

<sup>587</sup> FS 76. Sørensen observes that Kierkegaard’s view of the centrality of redemption, which “must come from God”, was formulated by the time he was twenty-two. [55] Kierkegaard maintained this christological focus until his dying day. When Emil Boesen asked if he could die in peace, Kierkegaard responded affirmatively. When asked if this was because of ‘the grace of God in Christ’, he replied, “Yes, naturally, what else?” [Sørensen 70] For a comprehensive examination of Kierkegaard’s understanding of Christ, see Murray Rae, *Kierkegaard’s Vision of the Incarnation: By Faith Transformed* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997).

<sup>588</sup> UP I 156. Kodalle identifies reason’s implicit ‘dominating’ tendencies as in particular need of transforming: “The antiutilitarian dimension of meaning in the God-relationship is disclosed only to a mode of thought that does not shy away from the absurd effort of thinking against the grain of the quasi-inborn mechanisms of reason and its manifest or hidden instrumental constructions [...]” [406] See also Aiken 25. Kodalle argues that this, in no way, represents a fideistic jettisoning of rationality since, “[T]he task with the paradox is to grasp its unthinkableness and that requires full use of the categorical power of reason.” [Kodalle 407] See also Dunning 20-21. By contrast, see Gardiner “Kierkegaard” 236, and Rae 98: “[T]he appearance of God in time judges humanity, calls into question the criteria by which we presume to decide what is and is not possible for God, and requires that we relinquish our allegiance to the categories within which we have understood the world. This is the human decision and the only human contribution-- to let go of the understanding.”

<sup>589</sup> PF 14-15.

'contemporaneous' interaction with Christ.<sup>590</sup> Because this crucial encounter can only take place in the present moment,<sup>591</sup> Kierkegaard avoided an idealistic annulment of human history, as in Plato or Hegel where the historical serves as a mere 'vanishing point' for apprehending the truth of Ideal forms or *Geist*.<sup>592</sup> Climacus identified this as the central paradox of the Christian faith: "That an eternal happiness is decided in time by the relation to something historical".<sup>593</sup>

To summarize, Kierkegaard believed that humankind cannot 'naturally' choose to respond positively to God prior to the divinely initiated "collision of the eternal and the temporal in the moment".<sup>594</sup> In light of Christ's sacrifice, however, every individual is given the choice to either embrace or reject these divine overtures, which transform the unspeakable horror of one's consciousness of sinfulness before God into "sheer leniency, grace, love, mercy."<sup>595</sup> The refusal to accept God's grace on the grounds that one is 'beyond redemption', according to Kierkegaard, constitutes extraordinary arrogance: "It would be presumptuous and blasphemous if someone would think that by his unfaithfulness he has the power to change him [Christ], the power to make him less loving than he was [...]"<sup>596</sup> The Incarnation of the Second Person of the Trinity would not merely provide a means for transforming the broken autonomy of individual sinful human beings into right relationship with God-- Christ himself would deliver a supreme judgment upon rebellious sensate authority, which will be examined in the following chapter.

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<sup>590</sup> PC 34. See also PF 67-69.

<sup>591</sup> PC 63, PF 62.

<sup>592</sup> PF 13.

<sup>593</sup> UP I 369.

<sup>594</sup> BA 167.

<sup>595</sup> PC 67.

<sup>596</sup> CD 285.

## Chapter 5: Abundant Power: Kierkegaard's Concept of Power:

### III. The Tier of Authority:

During the past few decades, many commentators have focused increasing attention upon the socio-political implications of Kierkegaard's thought.<sup>597</sup> In his magisterial treatment entitled *Kierkegaard in Golden Age Denmark*, Bruce Kirmmse writes,

Kierkegaard's social and political views are often interpreted as being those which were shared by his Golden Age contemporaries, and he is thus depicted as having no politics at all, or, what amounts to the same thing, as having embraced a nostalgic, traditionalist, and irrational authoritarianism, a misty reverence for hierarchy and monarchy which was completely irrelevant to the emerging social and economic realities of his time.<sup>598</sup>

Several scholars trace an 'exodus' from the conservative political views of the cultural and intellectual elite, to which Kierkegaard was initially allied as a young man, to a more 'liberal' acceptance of egalitarianism and democracy following the social and political tumult of 1848, which roused Kierkegaard from his political slumbers.<sup>599</sup> Kirmmse correctly highlights his growing acrimony towards the political and religious establishment of the day, which climaxed in Kierkegaard's staggering attack upon Christendom, employing the 'popular' media in his campaign.<sup>600</sup> He definitely disdained the 'aristocratic' elitism with which the wealthy disregarded the lower classes, and cheerfully mingled with anyone he happened to meet. This explains Kierkegaard's deep pain at being ostracized following *The Corsair* scandal:

You common man! I have not segregated my life from yours, you know that; I

<sup>597</sup> See, for example: Merold Westphal, "Kierkegaard's Politics," *Thought* 55.218 (September 1980): 320-332; Robert L. Perkins, ed. *International Kierkegaard Commentary: Two Ages* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1984); Mark Dooley, *The Politics of Exodus: Kierkegaard's Ethics of Responsibility* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2001), 1 n. 2, and Robert L. Perkins, "Habermas and Kierkegaard: Religious Subjectivity, Multiculturalism, and Historical Revisionism," *International Philosophical Quarterly* 44.4 (December 2004): 481-496.

<sup>598</sup> Kirmmse *Golden* 3. He defines 'Golden Age conservatism' as "a conservative, apolitical, urban, and hierarchic ('organic') view of society, in which the institutions of absolute monarchy settled all vulgar political matters, allowing matters of social worth to devolve upon an aristocracy, not necessarily of money or birth, but of 'culture'." [197]

<sup>599</sup> For a thorough discussion of these events, see Kirmmse *Golden* 65-73.

<sup>600</sup> See Kirmmse *Golden* 451-481. Pattison observes that Kierkegaard routinely culled resources from "the world of popular culture". [48]



have lived on the street, am known by all. Furthermore, I have not become somebody, do not belong to any class-egoism. So if I belong to anyone, I must belong to you, you common man [...]<sup>601</sup>

Kirmmse rightly states,

Precisely because of his otherworldly Christian moorings, Kierkegaard does not feel the need to cling to what is known and personally advantageous in worldly matters-- namely, the aristocratic conservatism to which his peers and his social background would normally have led him.<sup>602</sup>

However, in keeping with his wariness of 'human' politics eliding into religiousness, his aversion of 'mass movements', and Christian sensibility towards the sinfulness of humanity, I am less certain that Kierkegaard's subsequent views may be regarded as "variants of liberalism and populism",<sup>603</sup> insofar as they seem less informed by such contemporary political developments than by his understanding of the Bible,<sup>604</sup> though he maintained a constant dialogue between the two to avoid an abstract or culturally irrelevant faith.

In *The Politics of Exodus: Kierkegaard's Ethics of Responsibility*, Mark Dooley represents a more pronounced example of severing Kierkegaard's 'theological content' from his 'ethical/ political' concerns, giving the impression of 'demythologizing Kierkegaard' for the sake of contemporary relevance. Dooley emphasizes "his more radically liberating idea of identifying the God-man as ethical prototype par excellence, the

<sup>601</sup> TM 346. Evidently, Kierkegaard did not consider his independently wealthy status to be an obstacle to rubbing shoulders with the 'common man' since, "[M]yself of humble descent, I have loved the common man or what is called the simple class". [PV 90] It is likely that Kierkegaard partially patterned his 'marketplace' meanderings after Socrates. He once stated that he occupied "a preferential position that ethically places him down in a lower class." [PV 120] Kirmmse describes Kierkegaard as "half peasant, half urbane aristocrat". [Golden 26]

<sup>602</sup> Kirmmse *Golden* 4.

<sup>603</sup> Kirmmse *Golden* 4. He continues that Kierkegaard "in the end came not only to resign himself to the age of the common man, but positively to welcome it". I'm more inclined to side with Perkins that Kierkegaard grew increasingly sceptical that any sort of political reform could untangle the jumble of "reflection, constitutional discussion, chatter, an ill-proportion between authority and responsibility, and a mystification about where real political power lay" in the aftermath of 1848. ["Critique" 211] See also Hannay 286.

<sup>604</sup> Kirmmse disagrees: "Kierkegaard drew his real political nourishment not from the verbal shadow of the cloud of culture which hovered over Copenhagen but from the solid substance of the democratic social revolution which was taking place in the countryside." [Golden 5] He does identify strong Pietistic resonances in Kierkegaard: "Pietism placed great stress upon personal piety, conversion, and the conduct of life rather than upon doctrinal niceties. It viewed the Church not as the administrative responsibility of the clergy but as the collective responsibility of the entire congregation. Much emphasis was placed upon forcing the individual to an either-or decision for Christ [...]" [Golden 29]

imitation of which engenders a sensitivity to the other qua neighbour" over "his tendency to advance the strictly Lutheran idea that the individual's private salvation is realized through an 'absolute relationship' to God."<sup>605</sup> While Dooley argues that his approach does not constitute "hermeneutical violence", it does not bode well for a project aimed at elucidating "genuine community",<sup>606</sup> which first strips a potential dialogue partner of 'extraneous' and/ or 'undesirable' ideological accoutrements before he is allowed to participate in "mainstream ethical and political debate".<sup>607</sup> Instead of specifically analyzing the sphere of politics separately from his Christian beliefs or politicizing his faith,<sup>608</sup> I intend to foreground Kierkegaard's Christian concerns to show how his theory of power is rooted in and stems from this theological core, thus avoiding the 'Grundtvigian' pitfall wherein, "Politics ('the human') remains related to religion ('the Christian') as its anteroom, its preparation."<sup>609</sup>

#### A. The Arrival of Christ:

Throughout his life, Kierkegaard expressed a childlike wonder over the divine motivation which lies at the heart of the incomprehensible truth of Christianity.<sup>610</sup> As Climacus mused, "The absurd is that the eternal truth has come into existence in time, that God has come into existence, has been born, has grown up, etc., has come into existence

<sup>605</sup> Dooley xv.

<sup>606</sup> Dooley xxi.

<sup>607</sup> Dooley xiii. In retrospect, his somewhat acerbic introduction gives way to a cogent and fruitful comparison of Derrida and Kierkegaard, which is even appreciated by a 'purist' like me-- he just needs to replace his prefatory 'welcome mat'!

<sup>608</sup> Nicoletti addresses similar concerns. [184]

<sup>609</sup> Kirmmse *Golden* 221. This explains my squeamishness over the political associations which may be attached to the claim that Kierkegaard was "a 'liberal' with respect to his sink-or-swim individualistic notion of salvation." [Kirmmse *Golden* 276]. This would make him as 'liberal' as St. Paul and the Gospel writers! [Mt. 28:19-20, Gal. 3:28] Kirmmse himself is well-aware of Kierkegaard's "prioritarian view"-- "What is required is thus that one give eternity its due, that one respect its *priority*; then, far from being removed from one's worldly social responsibilities, one is better able to shoulder them" [291]-- and the directional flow from 'Christian' into 'citizen'. [339] However, at times, in his justifiable eagerness to correct the historical 'apolitical' interpretation of Kierkegaard, Kierkegaard's theological enterprise is seemingly subsumed by his political views. See, for example, p. 410: "[H]is entire authorship is informed and guided by his vision of politics and society and [...] the concluding, polemical phase of his authorship must be understood as an expression of that vision in a post-1848 world." In fairness to Kirmmse, an explicit focus on Kierkegaard's theology falls beyond the comprehensive socio-political emphasis of this impressive work.

<sup>610</sup> Matthis observes that Kierkegaard's understanding of Christianity as paradox was formulated by the time he was 25. [438 n. 11]

exactly as an individual human being, indistinguishable from any other human being [...]”<sup>611</sup> It may appear counter-intuitive to locate discussion of the Incarnation under the third tier and not in either the cosmological tier under ‘God’ or the anthropological tier. There are two main reasons for this positioning. First, it illuminates the sovereign uniqueness and extreme heterogeneity of Christ, rendering it well-nigh impossible to slot him neatly within any categorical schema. Second, it accords with Kierkegaard’s theocentric methodology, which strives to locate Christ at the centre of Christian existence.<sup>612</sup> This chapter will demonstrate that, for Kierkegaard, the coming of Christ entails the ‘collision’ of the two types of authority. On the one hand, Christ embodies the perfect power of God, an omnipotence simultaneously manifested and masked by its inconspicuous nature. On the other hand, Christ embodies a perfected human power, one which does not seek its own interests, but seeks to guide and uphold the disempowered individuals around him. It is not surprising that both his unchallengeable authority as God and his example of proper human authority posed a colossal threat to the corrupt temporal authorities of his day. The discussion will first probe Christ’s revelation of authority, before investigating the differences between sensate and spiritual authority.

# 1. Christ as Saviour: Revelation of Divine Power as Omni(m)potence:

Of all the truths of Christianity, the Incarnation remains its incomprehensible central mystery, graspable only by faith.<sup>613</sup> As Anti-Climacus explained,

The God-man is not the union of God and man-- such terminology is a profound optical illusion. The God-man is the unity of God and an individual human being. That the human race is or is supposed to be in kinship with God is ancient paganism; but *that* an individual human being is God is Christianity, and this particular human being is the God-man.<sup>614</sup>

<sup>611</sup> UP I 210. See also BA 183, SW 658 [1849], CI 221. Rae elaborates on the incommensurability of the Incarnation with human rationality: “The juxtaposition of time and eternity in the person of an individual human being strains the credulity of the Western mind in particular, which has long believed that time and eternity, the transcendent and the immanent, God and man, are terms which describe mutually exclusive realities [...] It is to propose an absurdity which reason cannot accept.” [68]

<sup>612</sup> As Mark C. Taylor states, “Kierkegaard’s interpretation of Christ is the keystone of his entire philosophical and theological position.” [167]

<sup>613</sup> PC 77, UP I 210.

<sup>614</sup> PC 82. This theological ‘heir-splitting’ distinguishes Christianity from the religion of immanence which Feuerbach critiqued with his famous statement, ‘All theology is anthropology.’ See Feuerbach 57.

Kierkegaard subscribed to the orthodox doctrine of Christ's full divinity, insisting that it was not sufficient for God to put on a mere 'disguise' like Socrates' pretence to simplicity or a king in peasant's garb:

For this is the boundlessness of love, that in earnestness and truth and not in jest it wills to be the equal of the beloved, and it is the omnipotence of resolving love to be capable of that which neither the king nor Socrates was capable, which is why their assumed characters were still a kind of deceit.<sup>615</sup>

Climacus contended that only 'the god', whose life and teaching are one, can impart the condition for receiving the truth, enabling the learner to think the thought that thought cannot think.<sup>616</sup>

As the Son of God, Jesus came to impart an undiluted divine presence upon a rebellious world that was in dire need of transformation.<sup>617</sup> In order to combat the effects of sin, Kierkegaard argued that Jesus required the full power of God, the perfect mediation of divine holiness and compassion, which was "equally present in every moment, no greater when he breathed his last on the cross than when he suffered himself to be born."<sup>618</sup> In contrast to a kenotic emptying of power prior to the Incarnation, he contended that Christ's undiminished omnipotence was essential for three reasons. First, his loving omnipotence was always necessary to shield the temporal world from being overwhelmed by God directly entering into human history; subsequently, "[H]e uses the power of omnipotence to ensure his continually being nothing!"<sup>619</sup> Anti-Climacus reasoned that the very possibility of overshadowing his deity with the servant form entailed "an

<sup>615</sup> PF 32. Kierkegaard explored the idea of omnipotence coming in the form of a humble servant as 'divine deceit'. See BA 170, TM 414 [1851].

<sup>616</sup> See PF 26-30.

<sup>617</sup> I strongly disagree with Matthis' depiction of Kierkegaard's Christ as, "Not being an external object but the essence of personhood, 'pure subjectivity'". [432] By unequivocally emphasizing the historical particularity of Jesus, Kierkegaard insured that the individual is not assimilated into the divine *Geist* as with Hegel. Instead, every individual relates individually to God through a fully human intermediary, Christ. I also disagree with Rumble's 'Romanticized' view of 'union with God': "Kierkegaard never fully renounces the belief that a shattered self-assertion might give birth to undifferentiated unity with the godhead." [100] She appears to be reneging on her earlier contention: "Ultimately, Luther runs deeper in Kierkegaard's blood than Fichte, and absolute subjects never fared well on Danish soil." [92] Kierkegaard sought restored relationship between God and 'that individual', not fusion.

<sup>618</sup> WL 107. See also PC 301 [1849].

<sup>619</sup> FS 174. See also PF 45. In a Trinitarian 'flicker', Judge William stated that Supreme Power would have disrupted all normalcy had it not sent a representative on its behalf: "If his royal majesty had his lord chamberlain attend a christening party, it can perhaps heighten the mood of those present; but if the king

omnipotently maintained incognito".<sup>620</sup> Second, Christ's omnipotence protected him from succumbing to temptation or despair as his mission wound its arduous way to Calvary: "He uses equally great powers not to budge an inch from the position he has taken, where he will stand-- before the eyes of all, in the middle of actuality where he wants to express: My kingdom is not of this world."<sup>621</sup> Third, Christ used his omnipotence to perform miracles which insured that the attention of Israel would be riveted upon him as he effected his ultimate sacrifice.<sup>622</sup>

At the same time, Kierkegaard was careful to qualify this omnipotence as characterized by self-limitation and restraint, particularly with regards to respecting human freedom and eliciting a love which was genuine and unforced. In contrast to the sentiment that Christ endured all of his temptation during the 40-day wilderness survival stint, Kierkegaard maintained: "[H]is whole life is a story of temptation", the temptation to "secularize his calling" by using his divine power to accomplish his goal but irrevocably transforming his kingdom into an 'earthly' one.<sup>623</sup> As Anti-Climacus marvelled,

It is a strange kind of dialectic: that he, omnipotent, binds himself and does it so omnipotently that he actually feels bound, suffers under the consequence of his loving and free decision to become an individual human being-- to that degree there was earnestness in his becoming an actual human being.<sup>624</sup>

Consequently, omni(m)potence did not entail a pleasurable, pain-free existence for Jesus. Rather, Christ's life was characterized by profound, unmitigated suffering, according to Kierkegaard. His 'external' suffering consisted of the scorn and derision he experienced from a sinful and rebellious world,<sup>625</sup> as well as constantly battling every possible human temptation.<sup>626</sup> This was compounded *ad infinitum* by the ineffable, 'internal' torment of being separated from God on Calvary; hence, Kierkegaard was shocked by "the sublimity under which (to put it as strongly as possible) even the Saviour of the world sinks-- that

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himself were to attend, it perhaps would disturb [...]" [SW 99]

<sup>620</sup> PC 131. See also SW 99, 144; PF 32, UD 310.

<sup>621</sup> FS 174.

<sup>622</sup> FS 174, PC 96. On Christ's substitutionary atonement, see WA 123, 181; CD 299; PF 16.

<sup>623</sup> FS 58-59.

<sup>624</sup> PC 132. See also PF 31-32, 55.

<sup>625</sup> PC 95, 271 [1848].

<sup>626</sup> WA 122; PV 161 [1848]. Kierkegaard believed that Jesus, "as far as his own life was concerned was sure of only one thing: that he would be sacrificed." [CD 182]



God who is love yet can abandon him and do it out of love [...]”<sup>627</sup> Furthermore, Kierkegaard argued that Jesus suffered from a profound awareness of the effects of his coming: the realization that he could not spare his followers from agony,<sup>628</sup> and the excruciating awareness that, by coming ‘in person’, he would be intensifying the condemnation of those who obstinately rejected him. As Kierkegaard observed, “What heavy suffering: to have to be the stumbling stone in order to be the Savior of the world!”<sup>629</sup> Consequently, omnipotence cannot forcibly secure its ultimate aim-- that none should perish:

[H]is whole life was sheer suffering of mind and spirit through belonging to the fallen human race, which he wanted to save and which did not want to be saved, that a living person cruelly chained to a corpse cannot suffer more torturously than he suffered in mind and spirit by being embodied as man in the human race!<sup>630</sup>

## 2. Christ as Servant: Revelation of Human Power:

Recently, Merold Westphal has suggested that a new designation is necessary to reflect Kierkegaard’s theological developments following *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*: “[W]hereas in Religiousness B, Christ is the paradox to be believed, in Religiousness C he is also the Pattern or Paradigm to be imitated, most particularly in his compassion for the poor and powerless.”<sup>631</sup> Kierkegaard recognized the heterogeneous nature of Christ’s sacrifice and perfect obedience to God which is humanly impossible to

<sup>627</sup> JP IV 583 [1854].

<sup>628</sup> FS 174: “What torment, not to be able out of love to lower the price the least [...]” See also UV 224. However, Kierkegaard carefully asserted, “[T]here is an eternal chasmic abyss between his suffering and the human being’s.” [UV 281] See also JP III 571 [1849-1851].

<sup>629</sup> UV 254. See also SD 159-160: “He can debase himself, take the form of a servant, suffer, die for men, invite all to come up to him, offer up every day of his life and every hour of the day, and offer up his life-- but the possibility of offense he cannot take away. Ah!, singular work of love. Ah!, the unfathomable grief of love, that even God cannot-- as in another sense neither will he, nor can he will, but even if he wanted to-- cannot make it impossible for this work of love to turn into just the opposite for man, be the utmost misery!”

<sup>630</sup> CD 259.

<sup>631</sup> Westphal “Hegel” 120. However, I am leery of Westphal’s designation of “Religiousness C” to separate the ‘Christ as Paradox’ emphasis of Religiousness B from the ‘Christ as Pattern’ emphasis of his ‘later’ christological focus. [“Religiousness” 535] I prefer to see the latter as an extension or outworking of Religiousness B into Christian praxis, rather than inadvertently imposing an ‘artificial’ barrier between ‘Christian thought’ and ‘Christian practice’-- something Kierkegaard rigorously opposed and Westphal presumably does not intend.

imitate.<sup>632</sup> However, in order to challenge the spiritual indolence reclining within a 'popular' doctrine of 'cheap grace', he underscored Christ's role as 'Prototype' for human behaviour.<sup>633</sup> For this reason, Kierkegaard once mused that, if he could broadcast one sentence to the social-climbing, comfort-seeking Danish 'Christians', it would be: "Our Lord Jesus Christ was a nobody".<sup>634</sup> Anti-Climacus attributed Christ's desire to adopt servant-form to self-mastery, "this superiority over oneself of wanting to be incognito in such a way that one seems much lowlier than one is".<sup>635</sup> However, Climacus had no patience for a "childish orthodoxy" which reduces the Christian paradox of power to Christ's social status as a humble carpenter; rather, the Incarnation itself-- regardless of station-- entailed inconceivable condescension: "It is not more adequate for God to be a king than to be a beggar; it is not more humiliating for God to become a beggar than to become an emperor."<sup>636</sup> For Kierkegaard, Christ's greatest pronouncements on power pertained not to his choice of profession but to his absolute freedom from envy or thirst for sensate power. Hence, he once wrote:

[O]ne could indeed say: He chose a differential, since he chose to be a poor and insignificant man rather than to be prominent. But this is not true, for he was not a poor and insignificant man in contrast to prominence and wealth; if that were the case he would have belonged to the solidarity of the poor and insignificant. He was purely and simply man, who felt no pressure to own anything (consequently he was not poor) and found blessedness in being nothing (consequently he was not insignificant, either).<sup>637</sup>

<sup>632</sup> TM 423 [1853]: "But he still is not altogether literally the prototype, because he is, of course, heterogeneous to an ordinary human being by a full quality [...]" Thus, Kierkegaard maintained that the Old Testament law is still an effective force in underscoring the "eternal yawning abyss between the God-man and every other human being". [WL 108]

<sup>633</sup> WL [revised] 471 [1847]. By raising the costs of following Christ, Kierkegaard hoped that individuals would existentially realize the impossibility of pleasing God by their actions and throw themselves daily upon the grace of God. Hence, he once wrote, "I want to apply the Christian requirement, imitation, in all its infinitude, in order to place the emphasis in the direction of grace." [TM 425 (1853)] See also FS 191. Dooley observes that, "on Kierkegaard's telling, to strike the right synthesis between the finite and the infinite requires that one adopt as one's unconditional ethical goal and criterion the Christ-figure." [17-18] However, having severed this 'ethical' impetus from its theological foundations, the Lutheran doctrine of grace, Dooley misses the real goal and intent of Kierkegaard's 'ethical turn', and exposes himself to Nietzsche's damning critique of utilitarianism-- that one cannot lop off the theological head of Christianity and still vivify the ethical 'body' of the chicken.

<sup>634</sup> JP III 574 [1850]. See also SD 124.

<sup>635</sup> PC 129.

<sup>636</sup> UP I 596.

<sup>637</sup> JP IV 172 [1850]. This places a serious qualifier on those who link Kierkegaard with liberation theology; e.g., Dooley 133. See also JP IV 549 [1850], where Kierkegaard argued that one couldn't turn specific requests which Jesus made to particular individuals-- such as the rich young man's directive to sell everything he had, or the 'mourner' to not stay and bury his father-- into universal maxims. Anti-Climacus

Christ's living example entails a divine revaluation of all that human beings-- in their state of sinful autonomy-- erroneously esteem.<sup>638</sup> Hence, Anti-Climacus posited, "Christ has never wanted to be victorious in this world. He came into the world in order to suffer; *that* he called being victorious."<sup>639</sup> Christ provided the ultimate demonstration that true power does not maintain a hierarchical distance-- upon which such 'independence' paradoxically depends-- but rather overcomes all obstacles to reconciliation and union. Kierkegaard contended,

Thus his life was retrogression instead of progression, the opposite of what the human mentality naturally thinks and covets. In a worldly way, a person ascends rung by rung in honor and prestige and power [...] But he, in reverse, descended rung by rung, and yet he ascended [...]<sup>640</sup>

The loftiness and power of the heavenly kingdom manifests itself in sheer opposition to the loftiness and power celebrated by sinful humanity-- an omnipotent delimitation of otherwise overwhelming divine presence which simultaneously lowers itself in order to raise others and patiently endures the most supreme injustice given the identity and authority of the recipient.<sup>641</sup> Kierkegaard emphasized: "He did not descend from heaven in order to become *poor*, but he descended in order to make others *rich*."<sup>642</sup> It is extremely significant that Jesus never sought to appropriate sensate authority for his own cause. Such qualitatively heterogeneous power can be neither a threat nor a boon to the Kingdom of God. Hence, Christ acknowledged political authority over non-religious matters--

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laughed incredulously: "To want to proclaim him king-- him! It is just as strange and mad as to want to hand over all the wealth of the world to someone who under a sacred vow lived in poverty-- [...] what would he do with royal power, he who of all people was most indifferent to all things worldly!" [PC 169] Kierkegaard's point is that the offence of Christ and the Gospel is not limited to 'the establishment'-- *it is an affront to sinful human autonomy in all walks and stations of life*. See, for example JP IV 316 [1854]: "Christianity is the greatest, the most intense, the most powerful restlessness imaginable; it disturbs human existence at its deepest level [...] It explodes everything, bursts everything."

<sup>638</sup> He once posited that Christ's entire life consisted of "a terrible collision with the merely human concept of what love is." [WL 115] On the utter heterogeneity between the church and the nonchurch, see FS 96.

<sup>639</sup> PC 224. See also UD 379: "The sensate person will not understand what the highest is, will not understand what the good fight is, what it is to be victorious and to lose [...]"

<sup>640</sup> CD 277. Anti-Climacus emphasized that such radical identification with humankind is particularly indispensable in light of universal suffering: "If someone wants to invite the sufferer to come to him, he must either alter his condition and make it identical with the sufferer's or make the sufferer's condition identical with his own, for if not, the contrast makes the difference all the greater." [PC 13]

<sup>641</sup> JP IV 156 [1848]: "That supreme power is impotence is seen in the impotence of Christ, the only one who never got justice, for even his death became a benefaction, even to his murderers."

<sup>642</sup> CD 122-123.

'rendering unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's'<sup>643</sup>-- and rejected all attempts by the temporal powers that be to ratify, preserve, or "deify him".<sup>644</sup> The Danish theologian later concluded, "[I]t actually would be comical or ridiculous if Christ had come in earthly loftiness and splendor, because the loftiness he was supposed to express was the very opposite of that."<sup>645</sup>

### 3. Judging the 'Powers':

As the Roman and Jewish authorities could do nothing to win divine favour, support Christ's cause, or obstruct God's purposes, Kierkegaard believed that Jesus' example conveys everything a Christian needs to know about power: "God has walked in lowliness on earth and in this way has judged all such worldly power and might to be nothing."<sup>646</sup> Hence, for Kierkegaard, Christ's coming in the form of a lowly servant expresses the vital truth that, "no one should feel himself excluded or think that it is human status and respect among one's fellows that bring one closer to God."<sup>647</sup> Thus, even the most historically disadvantaged person "believes that this prototype, if he continually struggles to resemble him, will bring him again, and in an even more intimate way, into kinship with God, that he does not have God only as a creator, as all creatures do, but has God as his brother."<sup>648</sup>

For those who value hierarchy and inequality over their 'brethren', however, Christ's coming simultaneously represents a supreme rejection and judgment over sinful socio-political structures. For this reason, Kierkegaard declared that "Christianity is incendiarism",<sup>649</sup> a fire that consumes the corruption of religious truth since, "Christendom is precisely the very thing Christ wanted to throw out entirely, the very thing he came into

<sup>643</sup> Kierkegaard's exegesis reads: "Christ clearly means this: 'If you want to be a Christian, then snap your fingers first and foremost and above all at politics.'" [cited in Nicoletti 186]

<sup>644</sup> PC 47-48.

<sup>645</sup> JP III 418 [1850].

<sup>646</sup> CD 52.

<sup>647</sup> SD 161.

<sup>648</sup> CD 43.

<sup>649</sup> TM 51. Cf. Luke 12:49.

the world to annihilate.”<sup>650</sup> Christ’s example of non-truncated divine power in servant form further conveys a human model for true strength and leadership. Hence, Kierkegaard observed,

Christ has no scepter in his hand, only a reed, the symbol of impotence-- and yet at that very moment he is the greatest power. As far as power is concerned, to rule the whole world with a scepter is nothing compared to ruling it with a reed-- that is, by impotence-- that is, divinely.<sup>651</sup>

If Christ did not come to be served but to serve, Kierkegaard reasoned, how much more should Christians reject temporal means as an escape from service:

God does not use force to tear man out of the devil’s power. No, Christ allowed himself to be born, to suffer, to die-- to save man from the devil’s power. Injustice also has its rights, and in considering injustice it is injustice to want to commit an injustice against it: it is simply unchristian. The essentially Christian is: in suffering to permit injustice to have all its rights down to the least detail-- and thus to win, to conquer it.<sup>652</sup>

The heterogeneity of Christ’s message and example is reflected in the hostility he invoked. Through the course of his writing, Kierkegaard offered two reasons for why Christ incurred the wrath of his contemporaries. First, the demonstration of the obvious power he possessed, as testified by his miracles, authoritative teaching, and massive following, both intimidated the political and religious authorities and incited them to envy. Understandably, the leaders recognized the direct and implicit challenge to their authority represented by his insuperable “collision of pietism with the established order”: “Quite properly the established order poses the question: Who does he think he is?”<sup>653</sup> Second, Jesus’ genuine independence and liberty from conventional means of power sparked resentment in those who either sought to co-opt his influence for their own schemes of personal or nationalist aggrandizement,<sup>654</sup> or strove to indebted him to their service by

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<sup>650</sup> JP III 426 [1854].

<sup>651</sup> JP IV 184-185 [1851].

<sup>652</sup> JP IV 401 [1851].

<sup>653</sup> PC 86. This point is cogently expanded by Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Christology*, trans. Edwin Robertson (London: Collins Fount Paperbacks, [1933] 1981), 36. Kodalle cites a passage from the journals [JP #4901] with remarkable parallels to Bonhoeffer: “In the unconditioned all teleology vanishes [...] Only when every ‘Why?’ vanishes in the night of the unconditioned and becomes silent in the silence of the unconditioned, only then can a man venture everything; if he dimly glimpses one ‘Why?’ something is impaired.” [409]

<sup>654</sup> JP IV 163 [1850]: “It is obvious that one of the factors in Christ’s death was that he repudiated nationalism, wanted to have nothing to do with it.”



assisting Christ's cause.<sup>655</sup>

Who, in Kierkegaard's view, killed Jesus? Arguably, he attributed Christ's death to a collaboration of sensate authorities rising up against a common threat to sinful human autonomy. In fact, Anti-Climacus alluded to such an alliance: "So the people turned away from him, and the powerful sprung their trap [...]"<sup>656</sup> A more complicated and *eo ipso* 'Kierkegaardian' alternative would be that Christ's crucifixion represented the betrayal of these authorities working at times in collusion, at times in competition. Hence, certain Jewish authorities felt threatened by Jesus and sought to employ Rome's political power by depicting Christ as a political threat. Rome [i.e., Pilate] saw through this ruse and sought to keep Jesus alive because he threatened to destabilize the religious leaders' power base and would provide some political leverage or-- at the very least-- an amusing distraction.<sup>657</sup> As a goad against Jewish national identity and the religious establishment, Jesus apparently galvanized the Roman political leadership of the day.<sup>658</sup> Vexed by Christ's refusal to seek political aid in securing his release, and stymied by the threat of imperial treason levied by the religious leaders and the incited crowds, Pilate's pride was salvaged and his officiously washed hands relinquished Christ for crucifixion. Although this argument is an extrapolation from Kierkegaard's thought, it is consistent with his refusal to blame Christ's death entirely upon Israel or Christ's first-century contemporaries:

The death of Christ is the result of two factors-- the Jews' guilt plus on the whole a demonstration of the world's evil [...] Christ's fate is an eternal fate; it indicates the specific gravity of the human race, and the same thing would happen to Christ at any time. Christ can never express something accidental.<sup>659</sup>

<sup>655</sup> Anti-Climacus especially blamed the 'crowd' for crucifying Christ "because he in no way wanted a crowd for support, [...] would not form a party, did not allow balloting, but wanted to be what he was, the truth, which relates itself to the single individual." [PC 109] H. H. exposed the hypocritical 'self-idolization' in the people's attempt to endorse and thereby "idolize" Christ as 'one of their own'. [WA 61] Kierkegaard directed a similar charge at the contemporary 'worshiper' in CD 129. If Christ's 'authority' hinges upon human recognition and endorsement, it ultimately reflects an anthropocentred power.

<sup>656</sup> PC 56. See also WA 59-60.

<sup>657</sup> Kierkegaard soundly denounced Pilate's intended method of 'saving' Christ: "Judas sold him for thirty pieces of silver, but Pilate wanted to sell him at an even lower price, wanted to make him a poor wretch of a man, an object of pity for the compassion of the raging mob." [UV 255] Pilate then used the cross "to show the Jewish nation how wretched and weak it was." [WA 62]

<sup>658</sup> Luke 23:12: "That same day Herod and Pilate became friends with each other; before this they had been enemies."

<sup>659</sup> WA 208 [1847]. Kierkegaard's statement is a welcome corrective to anti-Semitic tendencies in certain theological formulations.

Arising from Christ's demonstration of true power and exposure of corrupted human authority, it is necessary to explore the concept of sensate authority.

## B. Struggling for Supremacy: Sensate Authority:

### 1. Defining Sensate Authority:

From the Tower of Babel to the systematic juggernaut of Hegelianism, human beings have chronically engaged in 'quantification', the arrogation of power by the illusory negation of the qualitative abyss between God and temporality.<sup>660</sup> Because of this nefarious blurring of the boundaries between the temporal and the eternal, Kierkegaard strove to reinforce "the perhaps most important ethical-religious concept: authority."<sup>661</sup> Anti-Climacus employed the term 'sensate' to denote the fallen human reality within the temporal order: "[T]he sensate, the secular, the momentary, the multiple-- in itself it is nothing, is empty. In the last resort, it cannot be said to draw to itself; it can only deceive."<sup>662</sup> It is important to clarify that, from Kierkegaard's perspective, all sensate authority is temporal-- i.e., belongs to the created universe-- and 'fallen'. However, not all temporal authority is sensate, as Christ demonstrated by entering fully into temporality and empowering his followers with spiritual authority, the means of contesting fallen human authority. Furthermore, sensate authority does not encompass only brute force; instead, it represents a human-centred authority derived from human recognition and directed towards human ends.<sup>663</sup> H. H. maintained, "*In the sphere of immanence, authority is utterly unthinkable, or it can be thought only as transitory.*"<sup>664</sup>

In contrast to an anthropocentric concept of authority, which relies upon fallacious because transient 'certainties', Kierkegaard once wrote:

'Authority' does not mean to be a king or to be an emperor or general, to have the

<sup>660</sup> "Everywhere there is and must be existentially an either/ or. And the demoralization of our age is precisely the continuous substitution or quantification." [JP IV 179 (1851)].

<sup>661</sup> WA 240 [1849].

<sup>662</sup> PC 158.

<sup>663</sup> Hence, Kierkegaard acknowledged the temptation to be a "builder, a teacher, or a disciplinarian" as a means "to rule over others". [WL 206]

<sup>664</sup> WA 99.

power of arms, to be a bishop, or to be a policeman, but it means by a firm and conscious resolution to be willing to sacrifice everything, one's very life, for his cause; it means to articulate a cause in such a way that a person is at one with himself, needing nothing and fearing nothing. This infinite recklessness is authority. True authority is present when the truth is the cause.<sup>665</sup>

As opposed to spiritual authority, which cannot be represented by externality, H. H. observed, "In the transitory relations of authority between persons *qua* persons, authority will as a rule be physically recognizable by power."<sup>666</sup> Moreover, should a church leader attempt to impose her authority using sensate power, she would ineluctably compromise both the heterogeneity of the Gospel and the divine authority [*guddommelign Myndighed*] with which she was invested.<sup>667</sup>

## 2. Sensate Authority Proper: The State<sup>668</sup>

Although Kierkegaard was a rigorous opponent of totalizing systematization, he firmly believed in careful philosophical definitions and categorization. Many errors result when an individual unthinkingly transposes the assumptions and methodologies of one category onto another.<sup>669</sup> According to Kierkegaard, categories can be readily identified by their teleology. Hence, he once distinguished the political sphere from the religious as follows: "[T]he political begins on earth in order to remain on earth, while the religious, taking its beginning from above, wants to transfigure and then to lift the earthly into the heavenly."<sup>670</sup> In addition to their respective ends, the two spheres are ultimately distinguishable by their anthropocentric or theocentric power sources: "[P]olitically, everything turns on getting numbers of people on one's side, but religiously on having God on one's side."<sup>671</sup>

<sup>665</sup> JP I 73 [1847].

<sup>666</sup> WA 105. Kierkegaard once advised that an individual "ought not be a ruler with direct recognizability as such" since, "This is a lower form of human existence [...]" [JP IV 178 (1851)]

<sup>667</sup> WA 105.

<sup>668</sup> This is not to suggest that the state represents the only proper sensate authority, as opposed to the Human Rights Commission, the World Health Organization, or the Royal and Ancient's authority on golf. Rather, it is the form with which Kierkegaard was most concerned.

<sup>669</sup> PV 109. By contrast, when subjects are examined within their proper disciplines, the result is a 'correct' concept as well as a 'true' mood. [CA 14]

<sup>670</sup> PV 103. For politics as "externality", see TC 54-55.

<sup>671</sup> TM 537 [June 9, 1855]. In light of this and other statements which delimit sensate authority regardless of democratic or autocratic format [See Section III B 5-6], I am not entirely convinced of the benign 'neutrality'

Typically, the Danish thinker seldom wrote exclusively on contemporary political and social affairs, since he regarded sensate glory, accomplishments, and power as intoxicating "vapors".<sup>672</sup> However, Kierkegaard was no naive idealist who believed that states or cities can be run solely upon 'spiritual' principles. Subsequently, he did not anarchically oppose all political authority, but rather sought to confine it within its proper bounds. Michele Nicoletti rightly observes that Kierkegaard does not condemn politics but the "sacralization of politics", the absolutist utopianism to which it had been wed.<sup>673</sup> As Kirmmse explains, "Genuine politics has to do with associations of people who have been through the individuating process of religious inwardness, and such politics will not transgress upon the religious sphere [...]"<sup>674</sup> With regards to political systems, Kierkegaard was somewhat conservative, a firm supporter of the traditional monarchy,<sup>675</sup>

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which Kierkegaard allegedly embraced, wherein he allowed that the state "may or may not find it prudent to adopt some appropriate form of majoritarianism", [Kirmmse *Golden* 415] particularly in the destructive wake of the French Revolution. [JP IV 149 (1848)]

<sup>672</sup> WL 160. Kierkegaard believed that such 'externalities' can neither help nor hinder one from becoming a Christian. [TC 54-55] Frater Taciturnus asserted, "It is a contradiction to be willing to sacrifice one's life for a finite goal, and in the eyes of poetry such behavior is comic, akin to dancing oneself to death [...]" [SW 410] Similarly, Kierkegaard had little patience for political platforms for equal human rights, asserting that such misguided attempts to dislocate true human egalitarianism-- found only as individuals stand 'before God'-- into temporality, merely produce a 'counterfeit equality'. [BA 230 (October 1848)]. On the impossibility of 'external' equality, see UD 143. Hannay states, "Kierkegaard accepts the value of associative links in which people preserve and even strengthen their individual differences." [292] However, "It is only when they amount to injustices, and hence constitute disrespect for persons, that differences should be eliminated." [298] Kirmmse comments, "[I]t is of crucial importance that the reader note that-- with the exception of SK's own personal judgment that, as a practical matter, worldly equality is unattainable-- SK's stance is completely open and 'agnostic' on the question of politics *per se*, be they conservative, egalitarian, etc." [Golden 324]

<sup>673</sup> Nicoletti 187. By contrast, Bergmann argues that Kierkegaard "remained antipolitical in the initial meaning of the term, i.e., disputing the secular". [6]

<sup>674</sup> Kirmmse *Golden* 272.

<sup>675</sup> Climacus observed, "Of all forms of government, the monarchical is the best. More than any other form of government, it encourages and protects the secret fancies and the innocent follies of private persons." [UP I 620] Kierkegaard once instructed King Christian VIII on how to rule properly. [JK 155-157 (1849)] He was, however, less enamoured of politicians, comparing them to "the Church Fathers' descriptions of demons." [JP IV 134 [May 21, 1839] Did Kierkegaard relinquish his monarchism for more democratic sympathies following the 1848 upheavals as Kirmmse contends? Although most of his explicitly monarchical statements were written prior to 1848, highly critical statements concerning populism and liberalism appear well after that year. Nicolai Grundtvig, "who remained, socially, a staunch partisan of peasant egalitarianism, but who was, politically, a resolute supporter of the monarchy" [Kirmmse *Golden* 55], demonstrates how one might shift on some political fronts but remain conservatively entrenched in others. I concur heartily with Kirmmse's contention, "If culture, then, is taken to be that which constitutes the core and meaning of human existence, Kierkegaard will seem to be a radical egalitarian who attacked the prevailing elitism of the Golden Age." [Golden 85]; however, this response reflects Kierkegaard's theological critique of the 'aesthetic' sphere of existence, which was formulated well before 1848. Plekon



which upheld-- at least in principle-- the dignity and importance of the individual chosen by 'grace' rather than ability,<sup>676</sup> in contrast to recent democratic movements which, he felt, sacrificed the individual to a dehumanizing collectivism.<sup>677</sup> Originally, he agreed with Hegel that the state represented the highest vehicle of virtue and amelioration,<sup>678</sup> but later chided himself for such 'childish babble.'<sup>679</sup> As Westphal succinctly writes of the Christian ideal,

It does not merely demand that I abandon my criminal or immoral ways and conform to the prevailing mores of my society; it subjects social morality itself to the test of an infinite demand and deprives social conformity of an ultimate comfort. It tells me, as it told Socrates of old, that to be a good Athenian one must be more than a good Athenian.<sup>680</sup>

Kierkegaard eventually concluded that the state protects an indolent status quo and, though it often threatens the emergence of the individual,<sup>681</sup> it is a "necessary evil" which provides "a safeguard against egotism by manifesting a higher egotism which copes with all the individual egotisms".<sup>682</sup> The state can even exert a positive impact upon the

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observes that Kierkegaard was not a 'pure' conservative even before his 1848 'shift' "precisely because his social theory focuses so nearly on the individual." ["Apocalypse" 47] Moreover, he notes that Kierkegaard attacked both liberals and conservatives for endorsing "the synthesis of Christianity and culture" and "a capitalist political economy." ["Apocalypse" 48] In light of the increasing clamour for populist-driven reforms, it would have been too risky for Kierkegaard's theological project to throw his hat into the 'democratic' ring.

<sup>676</sup> JP IV 135 [August 8, 1839].

<sup>677</sup> He concluded that populism is an effective if deplorable means of securing power: "[T]o love the crowd or pretend to love it, to make it the authority for *the truth* is the way to acquire tangible power, the way to all kinds of temporal and worldly advantage-- it is also untruth, since the crowd is untruth." [PV 111] His worst nightmare was that the crowd is permitted "to vote on Christianity." [PC 365 (1851)] He blamed the lamentable rise of spurious populist movements and demands for reform on weak leaders in positions of authority. [BA 149] In response to his pleas to Bishop Mynster that ecclesial leaders must 'properly grasp the reins', Kierkegaard wrote: "He then usually answers that it is futile to want to tyrannize." [PC 364 (1851)]

<sup>678</sup> EO II 485 n. 29.

<sup>679</sup> JP IV 199-200 [1854]. Perkins contends that, while Hegel accommodated himself to the contemporary 'divorce' of rights and duties, and ratified authority in constitutional monarchy, Kierkegaard remained sceptical that any new political arrangement could legitimately rule the current disorder. ["Critique" 208-209] For Kierkegaard's politics as a rebuttal to Hegel's deification of the state as the ultimate instrument of *Geist*, see Dooley chapter 2, and Westphal "Abraham" 76. Westphal, however, argues that Kierkegaard shares Hegel's aversion to "analytic or compositional individualism" in which wholes are composed of smaller pre-existing parts, which led to Hegel's initial formulation of *Geist*. ["Politics" 321] However, he states, "[T]he issue between Hegel's philosophy and Kierkegaard's faith is that of *apotheosis vs. incarnation*. Does man become God or does God become man?" [328] For speculative philosophy's eradication of the "infinite qualitative distinction" between omniscience and human thought, see Aiken 25.

<sup>680</sup> Westphal "Sociology" 138.

<sup>681</sup> JP IV 147 [1848]. On history's pendular swinging between individuality and collectivism, see JP IV 130 [December 11, 1836].

<sup>682</sup> JP IV 200 [1854].



development of the individual, for the innate pressures which the state directs upon individuals in order to maintain peace through conformity can serve as a vital stimulus which helps to inculcate the necessary strength to stand alone. Thus, Kierkegaard opposed attempts either to subsume the individual within the state or to remove the individual from the state's jurisdiction.<sup>683</sup>

To the extent that sensate authority is confined to its proper sphere, Kierkegaard advised Christians to remain loyal to the state: "Christianity teaches: 'You shall fear God, honor the king'; a Christian is to be, if possible, His Majesty's best subject. But, *Christianly*, the king is not the authority; he is not and cannot and shall not and will not be the authority in relation to a kingdom that at no price wants to be of this world [...]"<sup>684</sup> In a journal entry, he once wrote: "Christianity is political indifference; engrossed in higher things, it teaches submission to all public authorities."<sup>685</sup> For Kierkegaard, every Christian possesses, as Pattison explains, "the double-citizenship of time and eternity",<sup>686</sup> whereby he is a committed earthly citizen so long as this does not compromise his identity as a 'citizen of heaven'.<sup>687</sup> Hence, Kierkegaard stated: "With responsibility before God and after having tested himself in his conscience, he [the Christian] attaches himself to the whole as a limb and takes it as his task to be faithful in the reproduction [of "the established order in his life"], while the responsibility of eternity saves him from the purely animal category: to be the crowd [...]"<sup>688</sup> According to this model, "The individual is primarily related to God and then to the community, but this primary relation is the highest, yet he

<sup>683</sup> JP IV 184 [1851]: "Why did these men become heroes? Precisely because there was the established order that could bring pressure powerfully to bear and by this pressure upon the single individual brought out the truth in him, made it a matter of conscience with the result that he did not make a mistake and go off half-cocked." As Hannay indicates, even levelling can have a positive effect in that it "puts the individual in a position where a radical choice can no longer be avoided". [288]

<sup>684</sup> TM 113.

<sup>685</sup> JP IV 176 [1851]. Perkins elaborates: the religious is 'political indifference' insofar as, "[t]he religious has always the same struggle, whatever the politics: the creation of inwardness or perhaps even of a new being." ["Critique" 216]

<sup>686</sup> Pattison x.

<sup>687</sup> WA 100, JP IV 154 [1848].

<sup>688</sup> BA 149-150. The "ordinary individual" seeks to "*reproductively renew the life of the established order within himself* by willing, under eternal responsibility, to order himself within it", whereas the "extraordinary individual" seeks to reform society itself "*by bringing a new point of departure for it [...]* by submitting directly to God". [BA 150]

does not neglect the second.”<sup>689</sup> From the perspective of the “merely human”, however, he asserted, “[T]he state is the highest human authority”.<sup>690</sup>

### 3. Limitations of Sensate Authority:

Although Kierkegaard retained a life-long aversion to the ‘crowd’, he acknowledged that political power in general and democracy in particular can play a vital role: “[W]ith regard to all temporal, earthly, worldly goals, the crowd can have its validity, even its validity as the decisive factor, that is, as the authority.”<sup>691</sup> He vehemently opposed the erroneous conclusion that temporal successes within an appropriate sphere of activity justify its deployment in all aspects of human life. While reforms “in street lighting, in public transportation [...] do perhaps best come from the public”, he emphasized, “but that a religious reformation should come from the public is untruth and, Christianly understood, a mutinous untruth.”<sup>692</sup>

In contrast to spiritual authority, sensate authority is vastly limited for several reasons. First, because it is “accidental”-- i.e., possessed by ‘good fortune’-- and not eternal, sensate authority ‘perishes’ and can never be ‘truly’ possessed.<sup>693</sup> Judge William declared, “[I]t is always despair to have one’s life in something whose nature is that it can pass away.”<sup>694</sup> Furthermore, Climacus argued that, to base one’s individuality on ‘external’ privileges, which are unavailable to all but the randomly privileged, constitutes existential “flabbiness” in contrast to the “ethical victory” of becoming an individual “in the same sense as everyone else is capable of being”.<sup>695</sup>

<sup>689</sup> JP IV 138 [1846]. Kierkegaard did not forbid Christians from holding positions of sensate authority, since such positions carry neither divine favour nor displeasure in and of themselves, [CD 60, WL 95] so long as “I don’t allow what I become in the world to be the earnestness of life [...]” [FS 167] Thus, such Christians must be ceaselessly vigilant to ensure that their faith isn’t compromised. [CD 55, UD 9] Due to the added temptations and risks of office, he emphasized the need to pray for political leaders: “[T]he higher a person stands, the more he needs God.” [UD 305]

<sup>690</sup> TM 149.

<sup>691</sup> PV 106.

<sup>692</sup> FS 19.

<sup>693</sup> CD 222, 225, UD 169, 317.

<sup>694</sup> EO II 236.

<sup>695</sup> UP I 356.

Second, because sensate authority represents a finite means for finite ends, it can delude the possessor by its transient accomplishments, masking the despair of spiritual dissolution.<sup>696</sup> Whether the person whose motto is 'Caesar or nothing' achieves that goal or not, Anti-Climacus averred that the end result is despair over herself-- either by becoming Caesar and thus 'getting rid of herself' or by failing to do so and thus being 'stuck with herself'.<sup>697</sup> Subsequently, temporal authority is powerless to liberate an individual from the thralldom of despair.

Third, sensate authority remains enslaved to the outcome and may be spectacularly thwarted by the most seemingly innocuous contingencies.<sup>698</sup> For instance, the use of sensate power may equally bolster an opposing cause as soon as destroy it.<sup>699</sup> Even the best philanthropic ventures can unleash debilitating spiritual effects, compounding material poverty with spiritual impoverishment.<sup>700</sup> Hence, Vigilius observed that a person may be "an omnipotent *Ansich* [in-itself]" and yet be a slave to fate.<sup>701</sup>

Fourth, sensate authority is impotent in and of itself and must rely upon external opposing forces and resistances to strengthen and define itself against.<sup>702</sup> For this reason, Kierkegaard wrote, "There is no earthly power for whom you are nothing [...]"<sup>703</sup> Even the most powerful tyrant rules precariously, since he must constantly convince his subjects that rebellion is against their better interests.<sup>704</sup> Kierkegaard contended that,

to rule secularly [...] is an indulgence, and therefore is based upon and is possible only in proportion to this: that the far, far greatest number of people either are so completely unaware that they are not part of (political) life or God-fearing enough not to want to bother themselves with it.<sup>705</sup>

<sup>696</sup> Climacus argued that willing finite goals ultimately finitizes the will itself. [UP I 394]

<sup>697</sup> SD 49. See also CD 74.

<sup>698</sup> EO I 25.

<sup>699</sup> This is particularly true when it came to dispelling a cherished but illusory belief. [PV 43]

<sup>700</sup> WL 298, UD 146.

<sup>701</sup> CA 99.

<sup>702</sup> UP I 507. Anti-Climacus sardonically argued that, for this reason, "one is loath to abolish God-- just to become even more important by being the opposition." [SD 148] Judge William lauded maternal love as 'true power' since, "[W]ithout receiving any impulse or any increment of force through external catastrophes, it is motivated solely within itself, is nourished by itself [...]" [SW 138]

<sup>703</sup> CD 128.

<sup>704</sup> JP IV 200 [1854]. Even then, the tyrant is not immune to subversive attacks of hypocrisy from those unable to revolt externally. [TM 189]

<sup>705</sup> BA 235 [1848]. On account of increased public awareness via the media, Kierkegaard contended that

Furthermore, there are immense problems for the prospects of peaceful succession, since the successor must establish an independence from one's predecessor; thus, sensate authority, unlike divine authority, can seldom be bestowed without some degree of seizing or tendency towards a will to ingratitude.<sup>706</sup>

A closely related fifth limitation of sensate authority revolves upon its inherent 'unjust' nature, in that it is based upon associations which unavoidably exclude or ostracize others and emphasize external differences between individuals.<sup>707</sup> Because it belongs solely to the finite realm, Kierkegaard maintained that such authority is a 'limited resource', which will always engender want, envy, and discord at some level: "*Every earthly or worldly good is in itself selfish, begrudging; its possession is begrudging or is envy and in one way or another must make others poorer-- what I have someone else cannot have; the more I have, the less someone else must have.*"<sup>708</sup> He continued:

The unrighteous mammon (with this term we perhaps may indeed designate every earthly good, also worldly honor, power, etc.) is in itself unjust and makes for injustice (quite apart here from the question of acquiring it or possessing it in an unlawful manner) and in itself cannot be acquired or possessed equally.<sup>709</sup>

Climacus posited that, once a person focuses exclusively on sensate accomplishments, the justification of immoral means follows "[a]s soon as the will begins to cast a covetous eye on the outcome".<sup>710</sup>

Sixth, sensate authority is unable to transcend itself; thus, the individual remains bound by her temporal limitations and abilities. According to Kierkegaard, self-mastery is a mere illusion.<sup>711</sup> Denouncing Kant's ethical autonomy as an avenue for "lawlessness and

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'genuine' governing power was at an end. Kierkegaard's comment that, "in our time each individual is already on the way to being too reflective to be able to be content with merely being *represented*" [cited in Nicoletti 189] is presaged in Luther's admonition: "[T]he common man is learning to think, and the prince's scourge, which God calls *contemptum*, is gathering force among the mob [...]" [Selections 391]

<sup>706</sup> See PF 155, UD 15.

<sup>707</sup> UV 144.

<sup>708</sup> CD 115.

<sup>709</sup> CD 115.

<sup>710</sup> UP I 135.

<sup>711</sup> UD 18. According to Mr. A, the attempt to 'absolutize' oneself and transcend one's historical particularity renders one "ludicrous". [EO I 145]

experimentation", Kierkegaard exclaimed that a person cannot bind herself in earnest to a self-imposed law "any more than Sancho Panza's self-administered blows to his own bottom were vigorous."<sup>712</sup> Subsequently, he believed that the sensate can only truly be overcome by the eternal.<sup>713</sup>

Seventh, sensate authority is all-enslaving, partially because any human life which does not consciously enter relationship with God is "as pitiable as children's play if it supposed to be earnestness."<sup>714</sup> In addition to distracting the ruling or ruled-over individual from the true basis of temporal authority-- inwardness cultivated by standing in the presence of God-- the individual is perpetually compelled to manifest her authority externally in order to 'prove herself'. Hence, in contrast to God, who need not retaliate instantly against rebellion, Kierkegaard observed:

Only a weak and soft person wants to have his rights at once, wants to be victorious in the external realm at once, simply because he is weak and therefore must have an external proof-- that he is the stronger. The person who in truth has power and in truth is the stronger calmly grants the weak one a free hand [...]<sup>715</sup>

Furthermore, such 'proofs' unavoidably enslave individuals to the audience upon which proof of one's independence paradoxically depends!<sup>716</sup> Thus, Kierkegaard once exclaimed, "What else is worldly power but dependence; what slave in chains was as unfree as a tyrant!"<sup>717</sup>

<sup>712</sup> JP I 76 [1850]. Hence, arguments that Nietzsche envisions power as self-mastery rather than power-over others [e.g., Kain 133, Golomb "Authenticity" 249, Kaufmann *Nietzsche* 312] would be a moot point for Kierkegaard, who posited that all sensate power is inefficacious, and rejected the notion that one can attain "self-constitution" [Detwiler 96] without impacting one's neighbours.

<sup>713</sup> For sensate authority's powerlessness to secure a soul, see UD 171-172.

<sup>714</sup> UD 265.

<sup>715</sup> UV 40-41.

<sup>716</sup> UP I 76. Climacus later noted that one may 'show powerlessness simply in showing power'. [UP I 515]

<sup>717</sup> UV 29. This criticism holds true regardless of whether the political system is a classic tyranny or a democracy: the authority is still anthropocentric; i.e., based on human recognition and submission. Hence, Kierkegaard reasoned: "Tyranny and democracy hate each other just as the one potter hates another-- that is, it is the same form of government, only in tyranny one is the tyrant, in democracy, the masses." [JP III 486 [1854] Quidam observed that any government which relies upon force quickly finds itself compelled to rely solely upon the 'sword' rather than base its rule upon creativity, love, and truth. [SW 324]



#### 4. Abuses of Sensate Authority:

The greatest abuse of sensate authority for Kierkegaard is its insistence in either assisting or aborting the purview of spiritual authority. Such abuse stems from "a complete misconception of Christianity" as homogeneous with human power and history.<sup>718</sup> For Kierkegaard, this constituted the most heinous crime of Christendom: "[T]hey have shifted the sphere of the paradoxical religious back into the esthetic".<sup>719</sup> The consequence of this categorical error is chaos, according to Climacus:

In our day everything is mixed together; one responds to the esthetic ethically, to faith intellectually, etc. One is finished with everything, and yet scant attention is given to which sphere it is in which each question finds its answer. This produces even greater confusion in the world of spirit than if in civic life the response to an ecclesiastical matter would be given by the pavement commission.<sup>720</sup>

For this reason, Kierkegaard remained a passionate advocate for a carefully qualified 'secularization', the separation of church and state: "[L]et us not secularize the religious but eternally separate the religious and the secular precisely by earnestly thinking about them together."<sup>721</sup>

The chief underlying aim of secularization is apparently to secure human autonomy;<sup>722</sup> thus, "[W]e are governed, educated, and brought up according to mankind's conception of what it means to be a human being."<sup>723</sup> Kierkegaard identified two complex manoeuvres which occur in the process of secularization: the nonchurch appropriates what

<sup>718</sup> TC 54-55. Hence, he lamented that, "the Church and the state are treated exactly alike". [JP I 239 [1848]. See also PC 223.

<sup>719</sup> BA 173. See also TM 129, PV 130.

<sup>720</sup> UP I 324.

<sup>721</sup> UV 125. Nor was Kierkegaard the first to make such an appeal. Bishop Hosius of Cordova (A.D. 296-357) exhorted the Arian Emperor Constantius: "Do not interfere in matters ecclesiastical, nor give us orders on such questions, but learn about them from us. For into your hands God has put the kingdom; the affairs of his Church he has committed to us." [Bettenson and Maunder 21] Anti-Climacus theorized that the relegation of church to internal, private life stems from the realization that sound faith does not ensure public, external success. [PC 215] See also Nicoletti 184-186.

<sup>722</sup> See SD 114: "[I]t can be so easily forgotten that everything, speaking humanly, can be more or less as it should be in these respects, and yet the whole life be sin, that notorious kind of sin: the splendid vices, a willfulness which, either spiritlessly or shamelessly, remains, or wants to be, in ignorance of in how infinitely far deeper a sense a human self is under an obligation to obey God-- in its every secret desire and thought, in its readiness to grasp and willingness to follow every slightest hint from God as to what is his will with this self."

<sup>723</sup> FS 86.

it desires from the church; the church appropriates what it desires from the nonchurch. In both cases, however, the church is rendered 'unchurchlike', disempowered of its eternal heterogeneity, and ignominiously reduced to "a kingdom of this world".<sup>724</sup> In nineteenth-century Denmark, this resulted in the 'finitization' of Christian faith primarily through three avenues: its intellectual conflation with philosophy, the political amalgamation of church and state, and the existential blurring of personal security and sacrifice.

a. Intellectual Finitizing: Philosophy and Faith:

In his unpublished treatise on Adler, Kierkegaard attributed the universal upheavals of the nineteenth century to widespread rebellion:

The calamity of our age in politics, as in religion and as in everything, is disobedience, not being willing to obey. One only deceives oneself and others by wanting to make us think that it is doubt that is to blame for the calamity and the cause of the calamity-- no, it is insubordination--- it is not doubt about the truth of the religious but insubordination to the authority of the religious. But dialectically self-willfulness has two forms: either to want to overthrow the ruler or to want to be oneself the ruler [...]<sup>725</sup>

In light of this revolt, Anti-Climacus accused speculative philosophy of arrogantly eradicating the heterogeneity between God and humankind-- in Rumble's felicitous phrase, the "speculative forgetfulness of finitude"--<sup>726</sup> in conjunction with an indolent dogmatic orthodoxy:

What has gone basically wrong with Christendom is really Christianity, that being preached day in and day out, the doctrine of the God-man (safeguarded in the Christian understanding, be it noted, by the paradox and the possibility of offence) is taken in vain, that the difference in kind between God and man is pantheistically revoked (first with an air of superiority in speculative philosophy, then vulgarly in the streets and alley-ways).<sup>727</sup>

When humans attempt to speculate on the realm of the eternal, the result is inevitably a

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<sup>724</sup> FS 171.

<sup>725</sup> BA 5.

<sup>726</sup> Rumble 89.

<sup>727</sup> SD 150. Evans rightly indicates that Kierkegaard did not reject all philosophical and metaphysical enterprise [*Fragments* 5], but especially denigrated attempts to rationalize the faith: "Woe to the person who betrayed and broke the mystery of faith, distorted it into public wisdom, because he took away the possibility

metaphysics or religiousness of immanence, a mythological projection of human traits and desires upon a cosmic canvas, a subtle self-celebration of human act and creativity in which, as Anti-Climacus remarked, "[T]o be God becomes a direct superlative of what it is to be a human being."<sup>728</sup> Kierkegaard was particularly cognizant of the duplicitous nature of this 'existential ventriloquism' in his era. As Vigilius observed, "[N]o age has been more skilful than our own in producing myths of the understanding, an age that produces myths and at the same time wants to eradicate all myths."<sup>729</sup>

Kierkegaard identified Hegelianism in particular as the predominant intellectual incursion upon the eternal, whose proponents "understand carelessly what Hegel has carelessly taught, that his philosophy was the highest development of Christianity."<sup>730</sup> He criticized the epistemological 'imperialism' at the heart of the Hegelian systematizer, who sought to disregard and negate particularity in grasping after totalizing universalities: "[W]hen the phenomena are paraded, he [Hegel] is in too much of a hurry and is too aware of the great importance of his role as commander-in-chief of world history to take time for more than the royal glimpse he allows to glide over them."<sup>731</sup> Ironically, in attempting to 'preserve' Christian faith within a philosophical system, Hegel had severed the 'wildflower' from its roots and pressed it into the pages of his tomes, preserving while destroying its vitality in one fell swoop.<sup>732</sup>

Kierkegaard was well aware of the tremendous power of intellectual authority in present-day Europe. Contrary to the Romantic era of passionate revolution, he wrote: "An age that is revolutionary but also reflecting and devoid of passion changes the expression

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of offence!" [WL 193]

<sup>728</sup> PC 104.

<sup>729</sup> CA 46.

<sup>730</sup> BA 94. He particularly abhorred Hegel's condescending attitude towards faith as a more 'primitive' stage of existence which humankind must 'move beyond'. [JP IV 458 (1851), SW 486, FT 37, CA 10] According to Westphal, Hegel falsely presupposed faith as a given: "[S]ince the pre-philosophic self is already religious it needs to be led not *to* faith but *from* faith to the more adequate knowledge of God which philosophy offers. ["Politics" 326]

<sup>731</sup> CI 222.

<sup>732</sup> In keeping with Hegel's controversial term, *aufheben*. See CA 225 n. 16. Judge William observed the "cunning politics" behind Hegel's dialectical strategy: "[E]xpressly to divide and to secure dominion by means of this division, inasmuch as the powers that in alliance are invincible, now separated and alien, cancel one another, and the understanding retains dominion." [EO II 151]

of power into a *dialectical tour de force*: it lets everything remain but subtly drains the meaning out of it.”<sup>733</sup> Although many of the Christian forms were retained, devoid of passion, they remained as lifeless as children’s toys without batteries: “[W]e are willing to keep Christian terminology but privately know that nothing decisive is supposed to be meant by it.”<sup>734</sup> Hence, God becomes a figurehead on the ‘good ship’ Humanity--ceremonially leading the throng, with absolutely no bearing upon the rudder. As Kierkegaard insisted, “To place a crown of thorns on his head and spit on him is blasphemy, but to make God so lofty that his existence becomes a delusion, becomes meaningless-- that, too, is blasphemy.”<sup>735</sup>

The roots of this sensate assault on the eternal extended back to the Greek philosophers, whose systems presupposed the homogeneity between faith and intellect as human-based, human-centred activities, and thus exuded the humanistic optimism that, “if we only understand the right it follows automatically that we do it.”<sup>736</sup> Once faith is banished to the abstract realm of the mind, decision and action are forever aborted in endless deliberation about what constitutes true proof that faith is warranted--demonstrations which are open to unceasing debate and subject to the unquestioned authority of human reason.<sup>737</sup> Hence, Kierkegaard warned, “The basic meaning of human deliberating is to weigh the temporal against the eternal [...]”<sup>738</sup> By definition, he maintained that faith can never be proved or disproved, otherwise faith is commensurable with human reason, and human beings become the higher authority who judge eternal truth.<sup>739</sup> Kierkegaard was especially critical of ‘Christian’ and biblical scholarship which reduced the life of Christ to historical data for ‘scientific’ scrutiny. To judge Christ for his

<sup>733</sup> TA 77. On how Hegel used his “enormous authority” to foist the “illusion” of “conceptual mediation” upon people, see BA 286. Kirmmse identifies *Two Ages* as “SK’s most specifically political work”. [Golden 265]

<sup>734</sup> TA 81.

<sup>735</sup> WL 208.

<sup>736</sup> FS 116.

<sup>737</sup> On transforming ‘oughts’ into ‘thoughts’, see CD 205.

<sup>738</sup> UV 309.

<sup>739</sup> FS 18, 125; WL 273; UP I 11, 30; CA 139. In contrast to false security, Kierkegaard contended: “[A]s long as one lives it is still possible that one could be lost”; hence, “[T]here will always be fear and trembling”. [CD 283] The lack of such certainty serves as a safeguard against the deployment of force, as Quidam quipped, “If only I were absolutely confident in my view of life so that I would dare to use force [...]” [SW 267]

historical impact is blasphemous, since it reduced him to a mere human participant.<sup>740</sup> It is also blasphemous to ask whether Christ was 'profound', "as if he were up for examination and should be catechized instead of being the one to whom all power is given in heaven and on earth."<sup>741</sup> As H. H. explained, "To ask if a king is a genius, and in that case to be willing to obey him, is basically high treason, because the question contains a doubt about submission to authority."<sup>742</sup>

In contrast, Anti-Climacus insisted that faith does not pertain to the intellect but to the will: "Faith is: that the self in being itself and in wanting to be itself is grounded transparently in God."<sup>743</sup> Hence, he argued that sin is not "weakness, sensuality, finitude, ignorance", but a being-wide rebellion against God which can only be acknowledged pending "a revelation from God".<sup>744</sup> If faith and 'subjective' commitment are supplanted by deliberation and 'objective' content, Christianity quickly collapses into a functional gnosticism, a "professorial-scholarly Christianity" whose chief power-broker is the "assistant professor".<sup>745</sup> By presumptuously applying itself to categories which only a religiousness of transcendence can address, philosophy misconstrues both doubt-- rendering it a thought category instead of an existential act of rebellion-- and also freedom. Thus, Vigilius contended:

When freedom is apprehended this way [i.e., as the capacity to do as one pleases], it has necessity as its opposite, which shows that it has been conceived as a category of reflection. No, the opposite of freedom is guilt, and it is the greatness of freedom that it always has to do only with itself, that in its possibility it projects guilt and accordingly posits it by itself. And if guilt is posited actually, freedom posits it by itself. If this is not kept in mind, freedom is confused in a clever way with something entirely different, with *force*.<sup>746</sup>

In summary, by offering its 'protective' services to Christian faith, human rationality in general and Hegelian philosophy in particular arrogated a higher authority and subverted that of God and theology. In return, theology achieved a dubious respectability and

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<sup>740</sup> PC 23, UP I 599.

<sup>741</sup> BA 183.

<sup>742</sup> WA 101.

<sup>743</sup> SD 114.

<sup>744</sup> SD 129-130.

<sup>745</sup> FS 196.

<sup>746</sup> CA 108.



short-lived legitimacy from this intrinsically 'Faustian' arrangement.

b. Political Finitizing: Church and State:

The incredible degree of fusion between the Danish government and the official church is unveiled in Kirmmse's penetrating study on 'Golden Age' Denmark. He observes, "Except for such few exceptions as the Crown might make, official Danish 'citizenship' during the absolutist period (1660-1849) was extended only to baptized and confirmed members of the Lutheran State Church."<sup>747</sup> The church had truly become merely "another arm of royal administration".<sup>748</sup> This is the second avenue of the finitization of the Christian faith. Kierkegaard attributed most of the church's usefulness to the state to 'Constantinian' motives of political unification: "The state thought it prudent to accommodate this teaching of eternity and instructions about another world in order to tranquilize people and thus be better able to control them."<sup>749</sup> Contrary to the message of the suffering Messiah, Christianity was marketed as a strategy for material blessing: "To be a Christian, so it was said, is sheer happiness [...] Indeed, to be a Christian is the only thing that really gives meaning to life, savor to joys, and relief to sufferings."<sup>750</sup> This unfortunate union fostered the revaluation of the eternal based on the aesthetic fallacy whereby, "[E]very striving for the infinite is measurable by finite rewards and advantages".<sup>751</sup>

Within the context of 'Golden Age' Denmark, Perkins observes that

<sup>747</sup> This determined one's right to marriage, relocation, and university education, among other things. [Kirmmse *Golden* 27] Thus, in Perkins' words, baptism became "the ecclesiotheological glue that binds the society together". ["Politics" 45] It is telling that Mynster ordered the mandatory baptism of Baptist children on the grounds that sacramental independence from the state church entailed "political disloyalty to the crown". [Perkins "Politics" 48]

<sup>748</sup> Kirmmse *Golden* 28. Lowrie recounts how Kierkegaard once had to seek the king's permission to withdraw his request for a parish. [59]

<sup>749</sup> JP IV 203 [1855].

<sup>750</sup> TM 190. Kierkegaard declared that objectifying God by transforming him into a means of attaining temporal success "is not venturing in reliance upon God; this is taking God in vain." [FS 100]

<sup>751</sup> TM 330. For this reason, Kierkegaard denounced medieval asceticism, since it was a societally sanctioned means of attaining honour and prestige. [FS 205, SW 253, UP I 407] He was particularly critical of the Jesuits: "The Jesuits wanted only one thing: to have power, influence, domination over men. The surest way to achieve that end is to live more austere oneself-- otherwise all esteem is lost-- and to demoralize men by making life easy for them." [JP III 421-422 (1850)]

"Christendom" entailed,

a combination of the 'conservative' forces that included the 'liberal' state and the cultural institutions, [...] which had as its aim the maximum possible preservation of the social and cultural arrangements of pre-1848 Denmark in a post-revolutionary parliamentary democracy.<sup>752</sup>

Kierkegaard contended that what people truly seek is a means of christening their desires and actions with the 'champagne' of divine approval, "a divine confirmation of the pursuit of the finite."<sup>753</sup> This results in what Anti-Climacus called the "deification of the established order": "the smug invention of the lazy, secular human mentality that wants to settle down and fancy that now there is total peace and security, now we have achieved the highest."<sup>754</sup> However Kierkegaard derided the self-proclamation of any 'Christian nation' as illusory,<sup>755</sup> and predicted that the commandeering of the eternal for the purpose of statecraft would inevitably end in revolt.<sup>756</sup> The merging of church and state imbued the state with divinely 'sanctioned' because appropriated 'infallibility', thus "abolishing the authority of Christianity and substituting the authority of the state".<sup>757</sup> The end result, he contended, is "a sophisticated esthetic and intellectual paganism with an admixture of Christianity."<sup>758</sup>

The state's use of the church was not one-sided, however, as this symbiotic relationship allowed for a cozy settlement in which the more inconvenient Christian elements of personal sacrifice and risk-taking were eliminated, while obtaining

<sup>752</sup> Perkins "Habermas" 492.

<sup>753</sup> TM 453 [1854]. See also PV 130. This included the "hierarchical 'People's Church'", the newly christened Danish state church under the 1849 constitution. [Perkins "Habermas" 492]

<sup>754</sup> PC 88. He considered the deification of worldly cunning to be "precisely the idolatry of the age". A prime example was the revaluation of genuine "earnestness" as spiritual 'showboating' [FS 34] and the eradication of Christian risk-taking on the grounds that, "To venture beyond the bounds of probability is to tempt God." [FS 102]

<sup>755</sup> TM 36, SD 134. This was particularly vexing for Kierkegaard, since the illusion that everyone was Christian was safeguarded by the 'guardian illusion' that the church and the state are one. [TM 107]

<sup>756</sup> JP IV 203 [1855].

<sup>757</sup> TM 556 [1855]. Kierkegaard graphically compared 'official Christianity' to the hollow husk of a caterpillar that has been consumed by a wasp larva from the inside out. [JP IV 189 (1853)]

<sup>758</sup> PV 78. See also FS 202-203: "The ordinary kind of Christianity is: a secularized life, avoiding major crimes more out of sagacity than for the sake of conscience, ingeniously seeking the pleasures of life-- and then once in a while a so-called pious mood. This is Christianity-- in the same sense as a touch of nausea and a little stomachache are cholera."

government salaries and pensions for its ministers.<sup>759</sup> Furthermore, Kierkegaard charged that government 'protection' "teaches Christianity the most loathsome bad habits: in the name of Christianity to use police force."<sup>760</sup> The intolerable alliance between sensate and spiritual authority also had a detrimental impact upon sensate authority,<sup>761</sup> rendering it as 'ludicrous' as if a mayor were to offer protection to a citizen who turns out to be the king in civilian clothes.<sup>762</sup>

According to Kierkegaard, the most invidious assault of sensate authority upon spiritual authority entailed the former's attempts to 'protect' the latter. The deleterious effects of this compromise were two-fold. First, "deplorable confusion" arises, since it implies that God, like Napoleon, needs assistance to achieve his aims; instead, Kierkegaard exclaimed, "God does not need anything at all in order to be victorious; he is from eternity to eternity the strongest."<sup>763</sup> Moreover, such a human-brokered relation to the eternal inevitably 'usurps' the eternal it was intended to 'establish'.<sup>764</sup> Subsequently, Kierkegaard posited:

The formula is very simple: a cause which is served by the refusal of human assistance-- yes, it may be arrogance, but it may also be God's cause; but a cause which is served in such a way that one accepts the assistance of men is politics. To set God's name to it does not turn the scales any more than to say: Now in God's name I am going out to steal, or-- in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ I shall go out and hang myself.<sup>765</sup>

<sup>759</sup> TM 556 [1855]. Hence, Jesus becomes "the greatest monetary object that ever appeared in the world". [TM 44] Kierkegaard stridently compared those "sheer worldlings" who sought to make a career of ministry to "cannibals" feasting upon the bloody sacrifices of the martyrs. [TM 321] By contrast, Kierkegaard exclaims, "The God-relationship should no longer be made to serve life's purposes. Or, to put it more drastically: The Absolute is pointless." [398]

<sup>760</sup> TM 158-159.

<sup>761</sup> Bonhoeffer concurs: "There is a state, in the proper sense, only when there is a Church." [63] However, Kierkegaard might balk at the potential for political deification in Bonhoeffer's assertion, "The state is God's 'rule with his left hand' [...]" versus the Church as God's 'right hand'. [Bonhoeffer 64]

<sup>762</sup> TM 112-113.

<sup>763</sup> BA 255 [1846-1847]. No one was more guilty of this debacle than Luther, who "became impatient" and "accepted the help of the princes, i.e. he really became a politician, to whom victory is more important than 'how' one is victorious; for religiously the one important thing is the 'how', just because the religious person is infinitely certain that he or his matter will be victorious, indeed that it is already won [...]" [JK 204 (1850)] Luther's folly is particularly evident in ordering the princes to repress mercilessly the peasant revolt: "On! On! On! Let not your sword grow cold [...]" [Documents 121] He later commented, "Strange times, these, when a prince can win heaven with bloodshed, better than other men with prayer!" [Luther Documents 125] Barth agreed with Kierkegaard's censure of Luther. See Luther *Selections* xiii.

<sup>764</sup> UP II 161 [1850].

<sup>765</sup> JP IV 189 [1853].

Anti-Climacus observed that such 'Pharisaical' veneration of one's own helps and systems constitutes a worship of one's own ingenuity and, subsequently, "makes a fool of God".<sup>766</sup> Kierkegaard thus concluded: "Just as many a cause may have been lost because the world's assistance failed to come, so also is many a cause ruined because the world was allowed to help."<sup>767</sup>

The second deplorable effect of sensate authority's 'assistance' in the Christian 'cause' is an over-realized eschatology, which prematurely heralds the historical actualization of Christ's reign on earth, supplanting the 'church militant' with the 'church triumphant'.<sup>768</sup> As a result, the church can enjoy maximum comfort in this life as well as the next-- a temptation to which Luther himself succumbed, according to Kierkegaard.<sup>769</sup> Climacus soundly castigated this "singing and ringing" triumphalism,<sup>770</sup> while Anti-Climacus scoffed, "[I]n short, we hear nothing but sermons that could more appropriately end with 'Hurrah' than with 'Amen'."<sup>771</sup> Subsequently, Kierkegaard contended, "[T]he 'Church triumphant' has triumphed over the world in an external sense, that is, it has in a worldly way triumphed over the world".<sup>772</sup> On account of this spiritual smugness, Kierkegaard maintained that contemporary Christians behave "even more sensately" than pagans "because they have this confounded security that basically they are Christians."<sup>773</sup> In light of the predominance of sensate authority, he underscored the complete incommensurability between the means and the ends of church and nonchurch: "[T]he Christianity of the New Testament, which teaches asceticism, voluntary renunciation, requires the most unconditional heterogeneity to this world, abhors all use of worldly power [...]"<sup>774</sup> Because he believed that New Testament Christianity had all but

<sup>766</sup> PC 92. On the "religious character of autarchic philosophy", see Peperzak 35.

<sup>767</sup> UV 340. A sentiment in line with Ezra 4:2-3. See also FS 127; UV 61, 338.

<sup>768</sup> PC 207.

<sup>769</sup> JP IV 189 [1853]. Bishops Mynster and Martensen receive similar censures. [TM 6]

<sup>770</sup> PF 107.

<sup>771</sup> PC 107. He later hypothesized on the diabolical origins of this contagion of complacency: "Then Satan said to himself: I shall not conquer in this way [i.e., by overt persecution]; and he changed his method. Little by little he deluded the Christian Church into thinking that now it had been victorious, now it should have a good rest after the battle and enjoy the victory." [PC 229-230]

<sup>772</sup> CD 229.

<sup>773</sup> PV 48.

<sup>774</sup> TM 517 [January 1855].

expired in his world, Kierkegaard compared his polemic battles to those of Don Quixote, "an individual struggling to uphold some venerable, idealistic cause [...] that can no longer be said to 'exist'".<sup>775</sup>

### c. Existential Finitizing: Security and Sacrifice:

The third avenue of finitization of the Christian faith pertains to the personal lives of priests and laity alike: the Gospel is duplicitously shorn of its self-abnegating, risk-taking elements and transformed into a bourgeois, 'eternal life' insurance policy. Kierkegaard was scandalized that, "[t]here is a secular mentality that no doubt wants to have the name of being Christian but wants to become Christian as cheaply as possible."<sup>776</sup> On account of such complacency, Kierkegaard asserted: "To have lived this human life in such a way that we have let others be sacrificed for us and to have lived this human life in such a way that we have been sacrificed for others-- between these two lies an eternal qualitative difference."<sup>777</sup> He did not completely disregard the spiritual solace provided by Christian faith, but emphasized that such periodic respites constituted temporary 'rest stops', not permanent 'rest homes'.<sup>778</sup> Hence, he wrote: "Christianity is taken in vain, however, when the *infinite* requirement is either made finite [...] or it is even left out completely and *grace* is introduced as *a matter of course* [...]"<sup>779</sup>

Kierkegaard radically broke with Christian tradition in blaming the apostles for corrupting Christ's message by reducing the cost of Christian discipleship; consequently, whereas Jesus amassed eleven followers in three-and-a-half years, the disciples gained three thousand 'in one hour'. He exclaimed: "Either the follower is greater than the Master, or the truth is that the apostle is a bit hasty in striking a bargain, a bit too hasty

<sup>775</sup> Ziolkowski 139.

<sup>776</sup> FS 16. He continued: "[I]n every human being there is an inclination *either* to want to be meritorious when it comes to work *or*, when faith and grace are to be emphasized, also to want to be free from works as far as possible." See also TM 151.

<sup>777</sup> JP III 335 [1854].

<sup>778</sup> TM 408 [1850].

<sup>779</sup> PV 16. Feuerbach levelled a similar charge at the indolent promulgation of "spiritual freedom [...] which demands no sacrifice, no energy". [163]



about propagation; thus the dubious already begins here.”<sup>780</sup> Kierkegaard maintained that this apostolic compromise has been ‘faithfully’ followed by their successors throughout the centuries. As a result, “Instead of whales, we have caught sardines-- but countless millions of them.”<sup>781</sup> He accused Bishop Mynster of allowing the Christian ideal to vanish via a ‘Hezekian’ compromise in order to secure a ‘worldly’ peace which would “last the few years I have to live.”<sup>782</sup> Kierkegaard denounced Mynster and his successor, P.L. Martensen, for ‘playing at Christianity’: “to remove all dangers (Christianly, *witness* and *danger* are equivalent), to replace them with power (to be a danger to others), goods, advantages, abundant enjoyment of even the most select refinements”.<sup>783</sup>

In view of the fatal compromise of the Danish church, Kierkegaard concluded: “No, whatever true Christianity there is to be found in the course of the centuries may be found in the sects and the like, except that being a sect outside the Church is no proof of being true Christianity.”<sup>784</sup> On account of the unmitigated scorn Kierkegaard exuded, Kirmmse argues that his attack on Christendom ended in “an apparent rejection of the Church (‘the concept of congregation’) as such.”<sup>785</sup> Having examined the detrimental impact of Christianity’s ‘merger’ with sensate authority, the discussion will examine the traditional dichotomy of roles, before demonstrating how these roles break down in Kierkegaard’s analysis of sensate authority.

<sup>780</sup> TM 181. This is one of the more blatant shortcomings of Kierkegaard’s understated pneumatology. Rae, however, alleges that there has been “widespread neglect of Kierkegaard’s understanding of the Holy Spirit”. [170]

<sup>781</sup> JP III 338 [1854]. See also JP VI 538 [1854], FS 259 [1851].

<sup>782</sup> FS 258 [1851]. Cf. II Kings 20:19. Kirmmse endorses Olesen Larsen’s evaluation of Mynster’s faith as “bourgeois humanism which has been united with a faith in Providence and dressed in orthodox expressions.” [Golden 107]

<sup>783</sup> TM 6. Hence, Dooley observes: “Kierkegaard’s antipathy to organized Christianity, or Christendom, stems from his belief that the genuine ethical message the Christ-figure brought through his deeds and actions has been occluded by the powers that be as a means of self-preservation and self-deification.” [142]

<sup>784</sup> JP IV 183 [September 23, 1855].

<sup>785</sup> Kirmmse “Out” 43. While Kirmmse contends that, “during the attack on the Church, Kierkegaard decided, finally, that he did not need to have authority in order to speak as an adult to others; being ‘a person of character’ was sufficient”, [“Out” 36] I would instead argue that Kierkegaard-- albeit cautiously-- exercised a spiritual authority over against the sensate authority of misguided ecclesial leaders. See Section III.C.4 below. Plekon argues that Kierkegaard remained a “theologian of the Church” until his dying day. [“Theologian” 4]

## 5. Positions of Sensate Authority:

Traditionally, positions within sensate authority have been divided into two main categories: those in control, the 'masters', who largely determine the goals of a society and allocate resources to achieve those objectives; and those in submission, the 'slaves', who largely supply the means whereby these goals are attained.<sup>786</sup> On one level, Kierkegaard acknowledged this division of human society. Hence, commenting on first-century Israel, he wrote: "[T]hat little nation [...] is divided, as tends to be the case, into two groups: the mighty and what is called the masses."<sup>787</sup> For Kierkegaard, however, the predominant struggle of history is not the clash between masters and slaves, but rather the doomed rebellion of sinfully autonomous humans against the incontestable power of God. Therefore, the distinction between master and slave becomes significantly blurred in Kierkegaard's writings. The inherent futility of positing human independence and well-being based on an anthropocentric foundation for power constitutes what Kierkegaard may have termed, 'the myth of mastery.'

### a. The 'Slave':

By now, it is not surprising that Kierkegaard remained antagonistic against anything to do with 'the masses' as a category, which became synonymous with mediocrity, whether spiritual or otherwise.<sup>788</sup> Attempts at populist politics were criticized, since they were still based upon human recognition and servitude: instead of one tyrant, however, the nation was ruled by the tyrannical will of a faceless abstraction-- public opinion.<sup>789</sup> Hence, Kierkegaard critiqued communism<sup>790</sup> and democracy with equal fervour: "[I]t [democracy] flatters their arbitrariness that the government they obey is of

<sup>786</sup> Esquith and Smith 803-807.

<sup>787</sup> FS 171.

<sup>788</sup> JP III 179 [1855].

<sup>789</sup> JP IV 147 [1848]: "But another form of tyranny is a corollary of equality-- fear of men." See also PC 16. For the pivotal role of media power in defining 'public' interest, see TA 91. Kierkegaard derided the media for 'inciting' rather than 'informing' the public, [TM 386 (1845-1846), FS 48] and he experienced its potency firsthand during *The Corsair* affair. Pattison writes that Kierkegaard's 'noble sacrifice' of privacy and reputation constituted "both his 'martyrdom of laughter' and a 'comic drama' that he 'allowed' Copenhagen to stage." [70]

<sup>790</sup> SD 61, JP IV 148 [1848].

their own making. It is like the pagan worshipping the god he himself has made-- it is about the same as worshipping oneself."<sup>791</sup>

However, Kierkegaard reserved greater contempt for political egalitarianism which, he felt, seeks to level all individual distinctions and reduce humankind to a collective of spiritual clones, which are "as exchangeable as a coin of the realm."<sup>792</sup> He acerbically observed that, by banishing 'first place', the 'second class students' are *de facto* promoted to "number 1" without any merit on their part.<sup>793</sup> This, in Perkins' pithy phrase, is "equality with a vengeance",<sup>794</sup> where exceptionality and extremities are supplanted by a dehumanizing conformity and moderation-- the abhorrent "everything to a certain degree".<sup>795</sup> Subsequently, Kierkegaard complained that any attempts to distinguish oneself from the crowd are condemned as 'elitist' due to a hyper-politicization of reality: "Everything is understood politically (but 'they' do not necessarily have a great understanding of politics), with the result that the religious person comes to be hated as being proud, aristocratic, and the like."<sup>796</sup> Even an over-ambitious, flamboyant sinner is far preferable to "mediocrity's sensate enjoyment of life".<sup>797</sup> Hence, Anti-Climacus stated: "The person who gets lost in possibility soars with the boldness of despair; but the person for whom all has become necessary strains his back on life, bent down with the weight of despair; but the petty bourgeois mentality spiritlessly triumphs."<sup>798</sup>

#### b. The 'Master':

Compared to the slaves, Kierkegaard's attitude towards the master class appears

<sup>791</sup> JP IV 148 [1848].

<sup>792</sup> SD 64. See also TA 87.

<sup>793</sup> TM xvi., FS 199.

<sup>794</sup> Perkins "Envy" 125. On the political implications of envy, see Perkins "Critique" 215-216.

<sup>795</sup> TM 93.

<sup>796</sup> JP IV 164 [1850]. Hannay explains, "Kierkegaard is saying not that certain activities are wrongly regarded as political, but that the large and important range of activities properly regarded as political are improperly regarded as being no more than that." In other words, they have left out the infinite. [276] Kierkegaard once blamed populism on Luther: "[Y]ou overthrew the Pope-- and set the public on the throne." [JK 233 (1854)] He posited that the Reformation was actually a political movement swaddled in religious clothes. "There will be a reaction (opposite to that of the Reformation); what looked like and imagined itself to be political will explain itself as a religious movement." [BA 234 (draft 1848)]

<sup>797</sup> TM 460 [1854].

somewhat ambivalent. On the one hand, he advocated that everyone must be treated altruistically: "One ought to exist for all men and not caste-consciously and egotistically to seek his own advantage."<sup>799</sup> He once hypothesized that his stunning 'defeat' during *The Corsair* scandal transpired because the poor ridiculed him as 'eccentric' for refusing to act elitist while the privileged ironically withheld their support for the exact same reason.<sup>800</sup> On the other hand, the populist upheavals of 1848 initially incited him to support the monarchy in light of the moral and religious vacuum which ensued following populist uprisings. Hence, his indignation rose against "a people who each day provide new evidence that there is no public morality in the land-- a people who must either be saved by a tyrant or by a few martyrs."<sup>801</sup>

Like Nietzsche, Kierkegaard indulged in a measure of romanticism by idealizing the self-assured aristocrat of a vanished, glorious past.<sup>802</sup> The importance of individual identity in Kierkegaard's theology afforded a natural affinity with the nobility's proclivity for manicuring strong personalities.<sup>803</sup> He acknowledged the veracity of Plato's principles for how rulers should exercise power:

[G]iven the presupposition that there is competence, the disinclination to rule is an excellent guarantee that the ruling will be true and competent, whereas the power-seeker too easily becomes one who misuses his power in order to tyrannize, or one whom the desire to rule brings into a concealed relation of dependency on those whom he is supposed to rule, so that his ruling actually becomes an optical illusion.<sup>804</sup>

Rather than incite a revolution, Kierkegaard sought to 'support' "governing by those who are officially appointed and called, that fearing God they might stand firm, willing only one

<sup>798</sup> SD 72. See also UD 143.

<sup>799</sup> JP IV 140 [1846]. He especially criticized the upper class for 'playing at Christianity' and thus succumbing to "the most aristocratic of diseases, to admire socially what one personally regards as trivial, because the whole thing has become a theatrical joke". [TA 73] Judge William criticized elitists who used brazen evils to distinguish themselves from "the common herd". [EO II 226-227]

<sup>800</sup> PV 62. On the complicity of the silent intellectual elite, see Perkins *Ages* xxi. Kierkegaard's inherited wealth located him in the privileged class of society. He once identified himself as a "master", who lacked "the authority to order his servant to go to a place of disrepute." [TC 184]

<sup>801</sup> JP IV 146 [1848].

<sup>802</sup> For example, see his criticism of the "new Napoleon" who conducted himself more like a 'tense gambler' than a 'self-contained hero'. [JP IV 186 (1851)]

<sup>803</sup> JK 244 [August 1854].

<sup>804</sup> TM 91.

thing-- the good."<sup>805</sup> He attributed the political tumult of 1848 to two deplorable factors: "the mistake from above", a government founded upon secular 'sagacity' rather than fear of God, and "the mistake from below", a disastrous desire by the masses to reject all forms of true government.<sup>806</sup>

On account of his desire for genuine reform over revolt, Kierkegaard originally argued that, rather than undermining the Danish church, *Practice in Christianity* "is certainly the potential defence for an established order if it understands itself."<sup>807</sup> With regards to ecclesiastical hierarchy, he did not seek to topple bishops or minimize their spiritual authority-- if anything church leaders were guilty of being too lax and granting too many concessions to the increasingly powerful masses.<sup>808</sup> Instead, he believed that power must rightfully be wielded by an educated elite over the chaotic masses, and always "in the service of an idea" so as to qualify as "the best power".<sup>809</sup> Subsequently, Kierkegaard sought to convert the ecclesiastical elite to his own understanding of faith so that, through their considerable influence, they might sway the rank and file.<sup>810</sup>

#### 6. The Myth of Sensate Authority:

Within the sphere of sensate authority, Kierkegaard favoured a strong centralized leadership which kept the dangerous forces of depersonalizing collectivism in check. However, within the sphere of spiritual authority, Kierkegaard theologically undermined political distinctions. While he upheld the temporal differences between rulers and subjects, he vigorously championed the spiritual equality of all individuals before God. In an attack on elitist society, he once charged: "[H]ow are you really any different from what you most detest-- lack of culture, the coarseness of the masses? You differ in that you do the same as they do, but you observe good form, do not do it with unwashed hands-- O

<sup>805</sup> PV 18.

<sup>806</sup> PV 19.

<sup>807</sup> PV 19. Kirmmse aptly dubbed the book an "ultimatum" to the state church. [*Golden* 379]

<sup>808</sup> Hence, he advised them to repent of their weakness and "grasp the reins again." [PC 360 (1850)]

<sup>809</sup> CD 321.

<sup>810</sup> TM 440 [March 1854]. This is why he waited in silent anticipation for Mynster's recantation and did not publish any further criticisms of the church until the elderly prelate's death.



human culture.”<sup>811</sup> Kierkegaard did not naively regard sensate power as a prelude to greatness. Rather, as Tacitus observed of Agrippa, the possession of power often highlights the mediocrity of the bearer.<sup>812</sup> Contrary to sensate proclivities towards hierarchy, the Gospel has irreversibly levelled all socio-political power distinctions. On account of Christ’s teaching and example, the nobility can no longer live in exclusivity, but must accept responsibility for the welfare of all others.<sup>813</sup> Christ’s sacrifice on Calvary constituted his supreme rejection of sensate authority, either to save his life, bolster his cause, or place him at the ‘mercy’ of aristocrat or artisan, Emperor or Everyman, patriot or pagan.<sup>814</sup>

Upon closer examination, any delineation between ‘master power’ and ‘slave power’ is problematic from Kierkegaard’s perspective for four primary reasons. First, they are both founded upon human premises which are instilled by and instil fear in others, the envy and angst of comparison.<sup>815</sup> Subsequently, he did not differentiate between the soul-damaging capacity of sensate authority possessed by the masters and the slaves’ desire for such power: “Far be it from us to strengthen anyone in the presumptuous delusion that only the mighty and the famous are the guilty ones, for if the poor and weak merely aspire defiantly for the superiority denied them in earthly existence instead of humbly aspiring for Christianity’s blessed equality, this also damages the soul.”<sup>816</sup> Although conceding that the populist demands for ‘external’ equality may eradicate all of the ancient tyrannies-- “emperor, king, nobility, clergy, even money tyranny”-- they merely establish a new tyranny, “the omnipotence of public opinion”, whereby one is still

<sup>811</sup> FS 64.

<sup>812</sup> TC 164 [January 7, 1846]: “[J]ust as Tacitus detected the contemptible slave mind in the Jewish King Agrippa, because he exercised tyrannical power, so contemptibleness is always seen most readily when it possesses power.” As ‘lord of the flies’, Domitian also exemplified small-minded obsession despite immense power. [WL 253]

<sup>813</sup> WL [revised] 411 [1847]: “The aristocrats take for granted that there is always a whole mass of people who go to waste. But they remain silent about it, live secluded, and act as if these many, many human beings did not exist at all. This is the wickedness of the aristocrats’ exclusiveness-- that in order to have an easy life themselves they do not even make people aware.”

<sup>814</sup> FS 171.

<sup>815</sup> Kierkegaard regarded envy as “the *negatively unifying principle* in a passionless and very reflective age.” [TA 81] Climacus rejected comparison as soul-aborting, since it obliterates the ethical by delaying action.

[UP I 546-547]

<sup>816</sup> WL 81.

enslaved by 'the other'.<sup>817</sup> Populist power is especially insidious for Kierkegaard "in part because it is not directly obvious and attention must be called to it."<sup>818</sup> Furthermore, he regarded "tyranny of the equal" to be "the most dangerous slavery" because it seeks to eradicate individual differences and thus "do away with every individual's relation to God".<sup>819</sup> Whether a person seeks to accentuate 'aesthetic' differences, like certain 'masters', or to eliminate those differences, like certain 'slaves', external differences still remain the foundation for power.

Second, both master power and slave power are founded upon the presupposition of sinful human autonomy. Although he is speaking specifically about material wealth, Kierkegaard's words arguably apply to sensate power:

It is corruption when the poor man shrivels up in his poverty so that he lacks the courage of will to be built up by Christianity. It is also corruption when a prominent man wraps himself in his prominence in such a way that he shrinks from being built up by Christianity. And it is also corruption if he whose distinction is to be like the majority of people never comes out of this distinction through Christian elevation.<sup>820</sup>

Any temporal element-- whether wealth, power, or prestige-- which becomes an 'obstacle' between God and the individual has entered the realm of the sensate. Although sinful separation from God allows individuals to take more liberties over other humans with apparent impunity, they ultimately squander their opportunities to become more fully human and embrace true freedom through obedient submission to God.<sup>821</sup> Based on the inexorable limitations of sensate power, a person cannot exercise autonomy without elevating herself above other individuals, without infringing upon the personhood of those around her and relegating them to abstraction-- 'the public'. Kierkegaard once wrote: "The tyrant was egotistically the individual who inhumanly made the others into 'the masses', and ruled over the masses [...]"<sup>822</sup>

<sup>817</sup> CD 403 [March 27, 1848], TA 108.

<sup>818</sup> CD 383 [1848].

<sup>819</sup> UV 326-327.

<sup>820</sup> WL 85.

<sup>821</sup> WL 253.

<sup>822</sup> JK 151 [1848]. Only the martyr had the ability to 'translate the masses back into individuals through his suffering love of humankind.

According to Kierkegaard, the social elite are particularly susceptible to this pernicious posturing: "[T]his distinguished corruption teaches the men of distinction that he exists only for distinguished men, that he shall live only in their social circles, that he must not exist for other men, just as they must not exist for him."<sup>823</sup> Although a tyrant may do this overtly, even the lowliest slave surreptitiously participates in the negation of the other: "The inhumanness and unchristianness of this does not consist in the manner in which it is done but in wanting to deny one's relationship in the human race with all men, with absolutely every man."<sup>824</sup> Within populist movements, H. H. demonstrated that the masses' endorsement of a leader is merely an extension of personal power, a subtle self-celebration by conferring one's support behind a 'favourite', which can instantly be revoked if the 'leader' fails to please his democratic 'masters'.<sup>825</sup>

By contrast, Kierkegaard dismissed all attempts to become a self on one's own terms-- or avoid doing so-- as profoundly rebellious and futile, whether by masters elevating themselves above the masses or by slaves 'losing themselves' in the crowd.<sup>826</sup> In the throes of human cleverness, even disempowerment can serve as a powerful distinction for excusing oneself from basic existential responsibilities owed to God and neighbour.<sup>827</sup> Nevertheless, fearing that unchecked rebellion against the masters would foster further insurrection against all higher authorities--namely God-- Kierkegaard had ironically followed Luther's precedent and sided with the ruling elite: "As the crowd intimidates the king, as the public intimidates counsellors of state and authors, so the generation will ultimately want to intimidate God, constrain him to give in, become self-important before him, brazenly defiant in their numbers, etc."<sup>828</sup> This anxiety led to a rare breach of principle whereby sensate authority, albeit indirectly, 'bolsters' eternal authority. Perhaps Kierkegaard feared the onset of Old Testament chaos: "In those days there was no king in

<sup>823</sup> WL 85.

<sup>824</sup> WL 84.

<sup>825</sup> WA 82.

<sup>826</sup> WL 93.

<sup>827</sup> WL 128-129.

<sup>828</sup> CD 385 [November 20, 1847]. See also Plekon "Apocalypse" 46: "He supported an orderly hierarchical structure reflecting God's rule over creation, one in which the monarch rules with authority in matters of state and the church governs in the religious realm."

Israel; all the people did what was right in their own eyes."<sup>829</sup>

The third reason why the distinction between master power and slave power is obscured in Kierkegaard's writing is that both are 'enslaved to the outcome'. The most self-assured master is precariously enslaved to the uncontrollable vicissitudes of fortune, external successes, and the submission-- whether voluntary or coerced-- of the masses over which he rules.<sup>830</sup> Contrary to Hegelian distinctions, so-called 'master' power represents the artful deployment of so-called 'slave' power, according to Kierkegaard:

The people is the force which has demolished kings and emperors; kings and emperors again have sometimes used the people to demolish the nobility or the clergy. The people has demolished the clergy, and the clergy has used the people to demolish the nobility, and the nobility has used the people to demolish the clergy. But always 'the people.'<sup>831</sup>

Furthermore, even the mightiest monarch remains a slave to circumstance,<sup>832</sup> a pawn of power, a concierge to soul-eroding comparison with 'the others'.<sup>833</sup> For this reason, Kierkegaard recalled Solon's wisdom that a person can only be said to have enjoyed a happy life after he has died and is safe from temporal mutability.<sup>834</sup> In *Christian Discourses*, Kierkegaard compared the reliance upon sensate power, honour, and prestige to the 'Praetorian guard': once employed, ostensibly to serve some higher cause, it quickly becomes the controlling cause-- the preservation of its own domain against all threats-- and

<sup>829</sup> Judges 21:25. Jones claims that Kierkegaard falls prey to a 'vicious' circularity: "[W]e need a usable criterion for identifying what does have God's authority, and we seem confronted with either deriving the criterion from relative authorities or with justifying the criterion by appeal to God's authority." ["Authority" 245]

<sup>830</sup> WA 215 [1848], BA 157.

<sup>831</sup> JP IV 146 [1848]. In light of such a sentiment, Perkins posits: "[I]n reality the crowd is not represented; it is manipulated." ["Critique" 213] Kierkegaard's attitude on power was markedly influenced by Pascal. See Pascal 220: "Power rules the world, not opinion, but it is opinion that exploits power. It is power that makes opinion."

<sup>832</sup> UP I 137.

<sup>833</sup> See SD 111: "[A] master who is a self directly before slaves, indeed really [...] is not a self-- for in both cases there is no standard for measurement." This standard can only be supplied by God, "that directly in the face of which it is a self." See also SD 50: "[W]hen there is someone beneath it [one's loftiness], then there is something beneath it, and then there is also the abyss beneath it." The inadequacy of the 'defeated' slaves' recognition/ ratification of the master's authority has been observed by theorists as varied as Hegel [Hegel I 184], John Stuart Mill [Agonito 243] and Charles Taylor. [50]

<sup>834</sup> WL 46, CD 255. Hence, only the dead possess true strength, "the strength of unchangeableness". [WL 327] The laughter of Pascal may be heard in the background of Kierkegaard's critique. See Pascal 43, where he chuckled at how "[t]he mind of this supreme judge of the world" may be disrupted by a 'buzzing fly'. See also Pascal 133-134.

shackles him whom it professes to serve.<sup>835</sup> Moreover, sensate prestige was a transient and fickle thing:

[L]ike the world's contempt, the world's honour is a vortex, a play of confused forces, a deceptive element in the divisiveness, an illusion, as when a swarm of insects in the distance seems to the eye like one body, an illusion, as when the noise of a crowd in the distance seems to the ear like one voice."<sup>836</sup>

Kierkegaard also recognized that, even under the most ruthless dictator, the poor can undermine his authority with the bitter blade of passive resistance: "But a disguise of hidden exasperation and a remote intimation of painful dejection will transform the glory and power and eminence into a plague for the mighty, the honoured, the eminent, who nevertheless cannot find anything specific to complain about."<sup>837</sup> He knew that victimhood could paradoxically become a position of power, particularly since a heavy-handed response by persons in authority inadvertently legitimizes the 'weak' as a threat, heaping further ridicule and antipathy upon those in power.<sup>838</sup> For this reason, he advised King Christian VIII to remain silent in the face of unruly accusations for, "[T]he 'masses' were like a woman with whom one never fought directly but indirectly, and helped them put their foot in it, and since they were wanting in intelligence they would always lose in the end [...]"<sup>839</sup> Hence, Kierkegaard contended that there is strength behind human 'weakness' and weakness behind every exertion of human 'strength'.

The fourth reason for the obfuscation of 'master' versus 'slave' power distinctions is that all humans, regardless of position and power, possess the most terrible power of all--the ability to reject God. For this reason, even under the most oppressive tyrant, no one is truly powerless.<sup>840</sup> As Anti-Climacus explained, "The powerful can cruelly have a person be tortured-- but the weak can cruelly make it impossible for love to help them, alas the only thing for which love asked and so ardently."<sup>841</sup> This represents 'true' power for

<sup>835</sup> CD 48.

<sup>836</sup> UV 28.

<sup>837</sup> WL 90.

<sup>838</sup> TA 108, SW 213.

<sup>839</sup> JK 155 [1849]. See also SW 51.

<sup>840</sup> CD 128.

<sup>841</sup> PC 77. From a Christian perspective, both masters and slaves also wield the horrific power of being able to compound the damage of transgressions by willingly withholding forgiveness. [WL 275]



Kierkegaard, the power to withhold one's self from the Grounds of all being and thereby lose one's immortal soul. Hence, he dismissed sensate authority and privilege as mere pretence. The actor who plays a king or the child who pretends to be emperor becomes ludicrous and pathetic when he expects obeisance in real life, "[b]ecause the play and the child's game are a nonreality. But neither is it reality, in the Christian sense, to be eminent in actuality; the real is the eternal, the essentially Christian."<sup>842</sup> Subsequently, Kierkegaard condemned sensate power whether wielded by master or slave:

What else is worldly power but dependence; what slave in chains was as unfree as a tyrant! No, the worldly is not one thing; multifarious as it is, in life it is changed into its opposite, in death into nothing, in eternity, into a curse upon the person who has willed this one thing."<sup>843</sup>

In short, master power *per se* is, therefore, a myth since no one is truly powerful. Slave power *per se* is, likewise, a myth since no one is truly powerless. It is now necessary to elucidate Kierkegaard's Christian alternative to the transient and inefficacious authority of fallen humankind.

### C. Striving for Service: Spiritual Authority:

#### 1. Defining Spiritual Authority:

Whereas sensate authority is bound to the temporal sphere both in its foundation and its goals, Kierkegaard posited that spiritual authority is conjoined with the eternal as both its basis and its *telos*, with truth as the cause it serves.<sup>844</sup> Climacus distinguished between two categories of truth: temporal truths, which require talent to expose and express, and spiritual truths, which can only be disclosed by authority from God.<sup>845</sup>

<sup>842</sup> CD 53. Again, there is a strong resonance with Pascal. Cf. Pascal 217, where he commented on Plato and Aristotle: "If they wrote about politics it was as if to lay down rules for a madhouse. And if they pretended to treat it as something really important it was because they knew that the madmen they were talking to believed themselves to be kings and emperors."

<sup>843</sup> UV 29-30.

<sup>844</sup> JP I 73 [1847]. On the impotence of power without purpose, see UD 91. Dunning identifies five features of "divine authority": transcendence, paradoxicality, heterogeneity, the tendency towards offence, and the tendency towards reduplication in the apostle's life. [23]

<sup>845</sup> PF 152. Dunning contends that, against 'conventional' belief that authority serves as the "foundation and warrant for faith", Kierkegaard posited that, "it is faith that constitutes the foundation and warrant; divine authority can only occur within a context in which faith is already established." [19] In light of the fact that

Although Kierkegaard insisted that both types of authority are necessary, provided that they respect their mutual boundaries, spiritual authority is 'superior', for it does not issue from the realm of temporality but from God,<sup>846</sup> and exists independent of the talent, lineage, and intellect of the recipient. As H. H. contended:

Authority, however, is something that remains unchanged, something that one cannot acquire by having perfectly understood the doctrine. *Authority is a specific quality that enters from somewhere else and qualitatively asserts itself precisely when the content of the statement or the act is made a matter of indifference esthetically.*<sup>847</sup>

For this reason, spiritual authority has no need for eloquence, brute force, or human genius. As soon as an individual seeks to embellish or rationalize an authoritative statement, that authority is ineluctably contested.<sup>848</sup> The only proper response, for Kierkegaard, is immediate compliance: "I should show him [a prophet] religious submission, [...] I should imprison my judgment in obedience under his divine authority."<sup>849</sup> Although spiritual authority is not qualitatively inferior to sensate authority, the latter may ironically obstruct an individual's receptivity to the former.<sup>850</sup> As the

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Kierkegaard (paradoxically?) addressed authoritative directives to his contemporaries in deriding them for their lack of true ('New Testament') faith, he would likely specify that divine authority can only be recognized as such through faith, though its binding 'jurisdiction' over temporality is in no way contingent upon human acknowledgment.

<sup>846</sup> JP I 74 [1847]. See also JP IV 128 [December 23, 1834]: "A great man is great simply because he is a chosen instrument in the hands of God."

<sup>847</sup> WA 98.

<sup>848</sup> WA 101.

<sup>849</sup> BA 26. See JP II 587 [1847]: "[T]he very first beginning of deliberation about it is deflection, rebellion." See also WA 24, BA 22, JP IV 459 [1851]. For his animosity towards biblical criticism which sought to overlook the 'clear' demands for obedience by focusing on obscure peripheral details, see FS 26-28. Kierkegaard avoided salvific legalism by contending that divine command is always conjoined with divine promise-- 'Thou shalt' means not only that you will do a task but that you will be able to do it by the grace of God-- [WA 32, 185] and by refusing to identify any prescribed 'externalities' with faith: "Now let these conditions be acts, specific conceptions, moods-- who really knows himself so intimately that he would take the responsibility for guaranteeing that these conditions are present in him just as they ought to be and are not illegitimate children of doubtful parentage!" [UD 269] See also BA 100 "[T]he greater the need for a striking outer manifestation of the decision, the less the inner certitude." By contrast, "The secular mind always needs to have decision externalized; otherwise it mistrustfully believes that the decision actually does not exist." [WL 145] However, Kierkegaard's later emphasis on Christ as exemplar shows that he did not envision a purely idealistic faith with no external manifestations. Rather, he insisted that externalizations cannot always serve as accurate gauges of inward passions or right relationship with God for either oneself or others. See Dunning 31 n. 42, Evans *Fragments* 283-284, Nicoletti 186, Perkins "Politics" 50, Stack 176-177. Evans does, however, admit that Kierkegaard occasionally "seems to fail to grasp the possibility of a positive expression for inwardness in man's outer life." [*Fragments* 284]

<sup>850</sup> FS 77: "[Y]ou must die to your selfishness, or to the world, because it is only through your selfishness that the world has power over you [...]" Subsequently, Kierkegaard believed that the Holy Spirit actively strips

individual's identity is 'transplanted' from the soils of sinful autonomy to the ground of divine love, 'we become lesser while God becomes greater in our lives.'<sup>851</sup> Until that noetic transformation has taken place via individual encounter with God, sensate authority will invariably misinterpret divine authority and sinful individuals will confuse life for death.<sup>852</sup> Hence, Johannes de silentio stated: "Abraham was the greatest of all, great by that power whose strength is powerlessness, great by that wisdom whose secret is foolishness, great by that hope whose form is madness, great by that love that is hatred to oneself."<sup>853</sup>

As recipients of an authority which does not rightfully belong to or proceed from human sources, Kierkegaard drew a connection with the biblical motifs of stewardship and service:

God in heaven surely knows best what is the highest that a person can aspire to and complete. But Scripture declares that no more is required of a person than that he be trustworthy as a steward. But a steward is more insignificant than the house and goods he administers.<sup>854</sup>

Although humankind is intended to be "the ruler of creation",<sup>855</sup> he asserted: "[H]e is not the lord in such a way that he is not also a servant."<sup>856</sup> Spiritual authority is also linked with the theme of descending in order to ascend, which reaches its paradoxical apex in the doctrine of the Incarnation, and Christ's death and resurrection.<sup>857</sup> Contrary to corrupted

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individuals of anthropocentric power "in order to become the power in us." [FS 87] He compared God's apparent 'heavy-handedness' with a coachman who lashes the horses to avert the coach from plunging into an abyss [FS 81]

<sup>851</sup> See UP I 55: "[A]n eternal happiness is specifically rooted in the subjective individual's diminishing self-esteem acquired through the utmost exertion." See also JP III 550 [May 14, 1839]: "God in heaven, let me rightly feel my nothingness, not to despair over it, but all the more intensely to feel the greatness of your goodness." For Kierkegaard's sheer amazement that the Holy Spirit can reside in 'infinitely inferior', 'self-deceptive' individuals, see JP III 572 [1850].

<sup>852</sup> In an 1854 journal entry, he identified "this fundamental idea in Christianity, that which makes it what it is: transformation of the will". [JP IV 551 (1854)] Kierkegaard attributed much of his personal suffering through *The Corsair* scandal to unjust charges of vanity and cunning: "Ultimately, it all comes down to this, that men are not able to conceive of an intelligent man not coveting status and power." [TC 217]

<sup>853</sup> FT 16-17. See also WL 144: "Christianity's eternal power is so indifferent towards recognition in the external world [...]" Unlike early church history, Kierkegaard emphasized that one must not become an ascetic celebrity by flaunting such 'indifference'. [WL 145]

<sup>854</sup> UD 148.

<sup>855</sup> UD 84.

<sup>856</sup> UD 85.

<sup>857</sup> For example, Johannes explained how, by subordinating himself to the universal domain of ethics, the single individual may be raised above it. [FT 56]

sensate authority, which seeks to rule by usurping God's position, spiritual authority seeks to rule by 'serving' God in the sense of 'obedience to' rather than 'facilitating the cause of'.<sup>858</sup>

Because the person invested with spiritual authority is representing the interests of God, not humankind, she does not seek the approval of her audience.<sup>859</sup> In stark contrast to sensate authority, which is measurable by temporal accomplishments and tangible displays of power, Kierkegaard regarded "true human greatness" as a liberation from dependence upon external effects: "What, then, is true human greatness? Sure it is greatness of heart. We do not by rights say that someone is great who has much power and dominion [...] [T]he more profound person does not allow himself to be disturbed by externality."<sup>860</sup> This does not preclude a 'great man' from exerting a great influence in the world; however, "[T]his would not occupy him at all, because he would know that the external is not in his power and therefore means nothing either *pro* or *contra*."<sup>861</sup> For this reason, Kierkegaard stated that the religious life view

does not overlook suffering, does not rashly hope in the world, but religiously wants success and failure to signify equally much, that is, equally little, and does not want the religious to have significance by way of or along with something else, but wants it to have absolute meaning in itself.<sup>862</sup>

For those who demand concrete proof of spiritual authority, 'no sign will be given'.<sup>863</sup> By rejecting the 'crutches' of temporal appearances and results, spiritual authority demonstrates both its independence from temporal limitation and its heterogeneous origins, according to Kierkegaard:

Do you know, my reader, any stronger expression for superiority than this, that the superior one also has the appearance of being the weaker? *The stronger* who looks like the stronger sets a standard for his superiority; but he who, although superior, appears as the weaker negates standards and comparisons-- that is, he is

<sup>858</sup> JK 249 [1854]. For an interesting parallel, see Foucault's notion of "pastoral power" in *Religion* 122-123.

<sup>859</sup> In fact, a Christian acts in response to her cultural context: "[I]f you fast out of fear of men, it is precisely not Christianity, and if men seek to browbeat you to give up fasting, then Christianity can mean fasting." [JP II 336 (1854)]

<sup>860</sup> CD 291.

<sup>861</sup> UP I 135-136.

<sup>862</sup> TA 13.

<sup>863</sup> Climacus alluded to Matthew 16:4 in UP I 414.

infinitely superior.<sup>864</sup>

Such freedom from results does not issue from a humanly generated stoicism or 'Vulcan' will-to-passivity. Rather, it is rooted in the utter incontestability of divine power: "For one all-powerful cannot be a co-worker with you, a human being, without its signifying that you are able to do nothing at all; and on the other side, if he is your support, you are able to do everything."<sup>865</sup> Subsequently, Kierkegaard posited: "What a man achieves or does not achieve is not within his power. He is not the One who shall steer the world; he has one and only one thing to do-- to obey."<sup>866</sup> By her liberation from slavery to the outcome through faith in God's ultimate victory, the Christian has thus 'conquered the changeable'.<sup>867</sup>

Kierkegaard insisted that freedom from basing one's worth and authority upon external effects can only come from a transcendent source. Nor can an individual break free from the sinful human autonomy in which she is paradoxically enslaved:

[A]nd is it not doubt's stratagem to make a person believe that he by himself can overcome himself, as if he were able to perform the marvel unheard of in heaven or on earth or under the earth-- that something that is in conflict with itself can in this conflict be stronger than itself?<sup>868</sup>

Because sin is a matter of rebellion rather than ignorance, Kierkegaard contended: "Those with authority, therefore, always address themselves to the conscience, not to the understanding, intelligence, profundity-- to the human being, not the professor."<sup>869</sup> They thus transfix the listener with the medusa-like gaze of Coleridge's 'ancient mariner':

<sup>864</sup> WL 228.

<sup>865</sup> WL 333. See also UD 307: "[T]he highest is this: that a person is fully convinced that he himself is capable of nothing, nothing at all. What rare dominion [....]"

<sup>866</sup> WL 93. For this reason, he considered prayer to be "[t]he weapon of the powerless". [UD 311] There is strong Scriptural precedence for this freedom from temporal results; e.g., Judges 7:7, II Chronicles 20:17, Ephesians 6:13. Kierkegaard made specific reference to Romans 8:37 [BA 232 (October 1848)] and Psalm 103:15-16 [UP I 135] in this regard.

<sup>867</sup> UD 19. See also JP III 553 [1840-1841] and CI 319.

<sup>868</sup> UD 128.

<sup>869</sup> JP I 73 [1847]. Aiken contends: "This Authority is concrete and personal insofar as it is grounded in the God-Man and his appointed witnesses, the apostles; but it is also objective insofar as these Sources proclaim and enact a teaching whose content stands over against both the private judgment of the theoretical thinker and the evanescent spirit of the age to which that judgment is beholden." [28] Dunning qualifies this position by regarding Scriptural authority as "derivative": "[T]he authority of Scripture is not an external, objective fact. It exists only in the relationship between the Word of Scripture and the obedient heart of the listener or reader." [22] However, I contest the 'objectivity-free' implications of Dunning's view that, "the special quality of Scripture resides not in *what* it teaches, but rather in *how* it teaches." [22]



"[D]ivine authority [...] is like the single eye; it constrains the person addressed to see who is talking with him and then fastens its piercing look on him and says with this glance, 'It is you to whom this is said.'"<sup>870</sup> Anti-Climacus dourly lamented the loss of such authority in Christendom:

There was a time when it [Christianity], with divine authority, exercised dominion over people, when it addressed each individual briefly, tersely, commanding authoritatively with '*You shall*'; when it shocked every individual with a rigorousness that hitherto was never known: eternal punishment. This rigorousness helped; in fear and trembling before the inescapable hereafter, the Christian was able to disdain all the dangers and sufferings of this life as child's play and a half-hour prank [...]. [I]t made it really true that to be a Christian is to be in kinship with divinity.<sup>871</sup>

After having examined the nature of spiritual authority, it is necessary to elucidate Kierkegaard's understanding of the loss of spiritual authority through an unholy reliance upon sensate defences.

## 2. Benevolent Blasphemy: The 'Apologetic' Compromise:

One of the ultimate indignations for the Christian faith, according to Kierkegaard, was the arrogance of individuals who either seek to employ spiritual authority for temporal means, thus rendering the infinite 'finite',<sup>872</sup> or endeavour to defend spiritual authority by use of sensate authority, whether by imperial edict or human reasoning. In both cases, the faith was 'secularized', its heterogeneity negated by a quantifiable commensurability with the temporal order, its transcendence inexorably supplanted by a religiousness of immanence or worse. Kierkegaard once sardonically remarked that Christianity was the only religion in world history which had been destroyed precisely by flourishing.<sup>873</sup> Because the subject of employing spiritual authority as a means to temporal gain has been already explored,<sup>874</sup> the use of temporal authority to 'protect' spiritual authority will now be discussed.

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<sup>870</sup> WL 104.

<sup>871</sup> PC 229.

<sup>872</sup> TM 408 [1850]. On the cheapening of grace, see TM 151, JP III 335 [1854], PV 16, FS 16.

<sup>873</sup> TM 160.

Kierkegaard's primary accusation against the Danish state church was this: by endeavouring to bolster faith with reason and material rewards or comforts, misguided ecclesiastical leaders had conflated God's rule with that of a human ruler, who consolidates power by means of favours and benefits conferred upon his subjects. In addition, the church had made faith commensurate with human reason in order to justify Christian belief to non-Christians.<sup>875</sup> Hence, he sarcastically charged: "They are embarrassed by obeying God because he is God; and so they obey him-- because he is a very great genius, perhaps almost the greatest, greater even than Hegel."<sup>876</sup> Kierkegaard regarded this action as existential treachery against God, a form of benevolent blasphemy in which one appears to be 'doing God a favour' but in reality reduces God to ludicrous dependence upon the human defender.<sup>877</sup> Kierkegaard scoffed at such megalomaniac presumption whereby, "God in heaven has to sit and wait for the decision on his fate, whether he exists, and finally he comes into existence with the help of a few demonstrations."<sup>878</sup> The most fervent defender unwittingly joins forces with the abject atheist's aim "to make *Christianity probable*;" that is, to 'demythologize' any supernatural claims and render it subject to human definitions of temporal im/possibility.<sup>879</sup> This is why Anti-Climacus denounced apologetics as the 'second betrayal of Christ':

[H]ow extraordinarily stupid it is to defend Christianity, how little knowledge of humanity it betrays, how it connives if only unconsciously with offence by making Christianity out to be some miserable object that in the end must be rescued by a defence. It is therefore certain and true that the person who first thought of defending Christianity in Christendom is *de facto* a Judas No. 2; he betrays with a kiss, except his treason is that of stupidity. To defend something is always to discredit it.<sup>880</sup>

In addition, this apologetic manoeuvre tacitly implies that certain Christians or offices are

<sup>874</sup> See Chapter 5 III.B.4.

<sup>875</sup> JP IV 463-464 [1850]: "Men simply refuse to be satisfied with acknowledging the absurd; so they substitute the most profound profundity and the most sublime sublimity [...]"

<sup>876</sup> JP I 74 [1847].

<sup>877</sup> On the logical incoherence of attempting to prove God's existence, see PF 39.

<sup>878</sup> UD 242.

<sup>879</sup> BA 39. See also Whittaker 85-86. Climacus blamed much blatant atheism upon, "[a] childish orthodoxy, a pusillanimous Bible interpretation, a foolish and un-Christian defence of Christianity, and the defenders' bad conscience about their own relation to it". [UP I 604]

<sup>880</sup> SD 119. Anti-Climacus' sentiment is a reflection of Pascal: "The extreme sin is to defend it [truth]." [339] Climacus posited that the only way to account properly for a paradox was to show its paradoxicality -- not attempt to resolve it. [UP I 219]

more 'valuable' to God than others,<sup>881</sup> and the spiritual authority of the apostle is surreptitiously replaced by the sensate genius of the exegete.<sup>882</sup> Hence, Kierkegaard lashed out vehemently against the Danish clergy: "You rag of velvet, did Christianity come into the world in order to have help from human beings, or in order to help them [...]"<sup>883</sup>

Kierkegaard once compared the sheer preposterousness of offering God assistance to "a child's giving his parents a present, purchased, however, with what the child has received from his parents".<sup>884</sup> The monumental achievement of human cunning is to transfer the nexus of faith from the realm of the personal/ existential to the abstract/ intellectual, whereby obedience becomes contingent upon sensate proofs and credentials. On the contrary, Kierkegaard contended:

It is claimed that arguments against Christianity arise out of doubt. This is a total misunderstanding. The arguments against Christianity arise out of insubordination, reluctance to obey, mutiny against all authority. Therefore, until now the battle against objections has been shadowboxing, because it has been intellectual combat with doubt instead of being ethical combat against mutiny.<sup>885</sup>

Kierkegaard strongly believed that no reliance upon sensate authority will benefit the Christian cause. Christians are to be characterized by "righteousness", which he defined as the unwavering commitment to 'seek first God's kingdom': "Neither is righteousness power and dominion, because no human being stands so high that he is higher than righteousness, so high that he would need to lay down his crown in order to have the opportunity to practice righteousness."<sup>886</sup> Instead, he argued: "It is said that by learning to obey one learns to rule [...]"<sup>887</sup> Christians must always oppose the universal rebellion of fallen humankind, but

not, of course, with shouts and conceited importance, not by domineering and wanting to force others to obey God, but by unconditionally obeying as an individual, by unconditionally holding fast to the God-relationship and the God-

<sup>881</sup> TM 43, CD 86, UP I 78. Kierkegaard also derided the formulation of doctrines, "[b]ecause doctrine is the indolence of aping and mimicking for the learner, and doctrine is the way to sensate power for the teacher, for doctrine collects men." [JP VI 535 (1854)] Luther's carelessness in this area led to "the same evil it fought: an exegetical slave spirit, a hyper-orthodox Lutheran coercion that was just as bad as the pope's." [BA 158]  
<sup>882</sup> BA 5.

<sup>883</sup> TM 44. See also UV 87.

<sup>884</sup> TM 392 [1847].

<sup>885</sup> PF 332 n. 30. For obedience as a precursor to Christian understanding and not vice versa, see WA 24.

<sup>886</sup> UV 210-211.

<sup>887</sup> WA 24.

demand and thereby expressing for his part that God exists and is the only master [...]<sup>888</sup>

The church's reliance upon any means of sensate authority, whether his majesty's prisons or reason's 'proofs', instantly transforms Christianity into precisely its opposite-- an earthly kingdom.<sup>889</sup>

In contrast to conventional apologetics, Anti-Climacus contended that the model for the church is not that of a 'defence attorney' but a 'lover':

A believer, after all, is someone in love; indeed, when it comes to ardor, the most infatuated of lovers is as a stripling compared with a believer [...]. [D]on't you think he would find it disgusting to speak in such a way as to offer three reasons for concluding that there was after all something to being in love-- more or less as when the pastor gives three reasons for concluding that it pays to pray, as though the price of prayer has fallen so low that three reasons were needed to help give it some crumb of esteem?<sup>890</sup>

Subsequently, a proper apologetics must always emphasize Christianity's heterogeneity with human development and history, according to Kierkegaard: "Every defence of Christianity that understands what it wants must do the very opposite and with all its might and with a qualitative dialectic assert the *improbability* of Christianity."<sup>891</sup> Moreover, the would-be apologist should wisely heed the words of Johann G. Hamann, as cited in Judge William's defence of marriage: "There is doubt that must be dismissed with no reasons or replies but simply with a Bah!"<sup>892</sup>

### 3. Effects of Spiritual Authority:

#### a. Suffering and Persecution:

In stark contrast to those wielding sensate authority, bearers of spiritual authority

<sup>888</sup> WL 121-122.

<sup>889</sup> JP I 77 [1850]: "This is the way Christianity came into the world; it was substantiated by authority, its divine authority; consequently the authority is higher. Now for a long time the relationship has been reversed: men seek on rational grounds to demonstrate, to substantiate the authority. And yet this is supposed to be the same religion."

<sup>890</sup> SD 135.

<sup>891</sup> BA 40. See also SW 662 [1850].

do not receive wealth, power, and honour, but rather pain, disdain, and rejection: "In this mediocre, wretched, sinful, evil, ungodly world the truth must suffer-- this is Christianity's doctrine [...]"<sup>893</sup> Hence, Climacus once asserted that, "religious existence is suffering, and not as a transient element but as a continual accompaniment."<sup>894</sup> For the Christian, persecution is an avoidable fact of life in a world of sinful autonomy and "grandiloquent illusions".<sup>895</sup> Regarding the non-Christian response to Christian witness, Kierkegaard contended: "Even if you say nothing, he notices, you may be sure, that your life contains, if it is truly related to God's demand, an admonition, a demand on him-- it is this which he wants to do away with."<sup>896</sup> Subsequently, the obvious and inexorable value differences between Christians and non-Christians cannot engender mutual tolerance: "[H]ow could the living, who cling with all their souls to this life and all that belongs to it, calmly put up with the presence of someone who has died."<sup>897</sup> Kierkegaard once declared that persecution is not a precursor to victory but the result of victory: "*Christianly* one has in advance already been more than victorious. Therefore one does not suffer in order to be victorious, but instead because one has been victorious [...]"<sup>898</sup>

Plainly, for Kierkegaard there is no divine 'witness protection program': "[P]eople look on the world's opposition as an accidental relationship to Christianity rather than as an essential relationship".<sup>899</sup> Quidam attributed the false presumption that God should prevent believers from suffering to "a Judaizing relic, a truncated particularism in

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<sup>892</sup> SW 695 n. 9.

<sup>893</sup> TM 321. See also JP IV 155 [1848], UV 99, UP I 402.

<sup>894</sup> UP I 288. Kirmmse adds, "We should take joy in our sufferings in this world because suffering is the occasion of the individuation which the God-relation entails." [*Golden* 304]

<sup>895</sup> CD 385 [November 20, 1847]. Anti-Climacus carefully delineated between "authentic Christian suffering" and "ordinary human suffering": "What is decisive in Christian suffering is voluntariness and *the possibility of offense for the one who suffers*." [PC 109] He earlier asserted that non-Christians are ignorant of what 'genuine' suffering [i.e., separation from God] entails. [SD 38] Kierkegaard concurred in CD 103: "All temporality's suffering is a mirage [...]"

<sup>896</sup> WL 130.

<sup>897</sup> FS 116. For accusations of the world's "jealousy" over the believer's love for God, see WL 125.

<sup>898</sup> BA 233 [October 1848].

<sup>899</sup> WL 187. See also PC 87, BA 148. Kierkegaard once queried why anyone would then subscribe to Christianity. He answered: first, "Christianity is the absolute [...]" and, second, that "the consciousness of sin" drives man to find no rest anywhere else. [TM 399 (1848)] Furthermore, eternal suffering far outweighs the 'momentary' suffering of temporality, "even though the moment were seventy years". [WL (revised) 413 (1847)]



Christianity, or ordinary cowardliness and laziness".<sup>900</sup> Suffering unjust treatment in a world hostile to God is such an intrinsic aspect of the Christian life that it represents one of the few exceptions to Kierkegaard's cardinal principle of incommensurability between inwardness and externalities: "[T]he degree of one's faith is demonstrated only by the degree of one's willingness to suffer for one's faith."<sup>901</sup> He once stated that, whereas suffering on behalf of righteousness constitutes a believer's 'privilege', "[I]t is his [God's] disfavor which allows these rich and powerful ones etc. to become more rich and powerful."<sup>902</sup>

Instead of undermining spiritual authority, external opposition inadvertently underscores it, according to Kierkegaard:

To transform hardships into a witness for the truth of a teaching, to transform disgrace into glory for oneself and for the believing congregation, to transform the lost cause into a matter of honor that has all the inspiring force of a witness-- is this not like making the cripples walk and the mute speak!<sup>903</sup>

Furthermore, it unites the believer contemporaneously with Christ and the prophets of old, and 'translates' Calvary into the present. Hence, Kierkegaard described true contemporaneity as "to make present the life of the departed glorious one in such a way that you thereby would come to suffer as you would have suffered in contemporaneity if you had acknowledged a prophet to be a prophet."<sup>904</sup> Authentic obedience to Christ is thus reflected by "poverty, abasement, mistreatment, persecution, suffering."<sup>905</sup>

Suffering injustice, thus, serves both apologetic and evangelistic purposes. Kierkegaard hoped that the illusions of some non-Christians might be jarred by witnessing

<sup>900</sup> SW 374.

<sup>901</sup> TM 324. See also PC 173 and JP IV 548 [1850]: "[I]f the voluntary goes, Christianity is abolished-- and so it is. When the voluntary disappears, 'spiritual trial' disappears, and when spiritual trials disappear, Christianity disappears [...]" For suffering as "road signs" that the Christian is on the 'straight and narrow', see UV 227, 297, BA 154, UP I 507.

<sup>902</sup> JP IV 408 [1852]. Ironically, believers had to endure suffering because of their very "willingness to suffer". [JP IV 550 (1854)]

<sup>903</sup> UD 83. See also WA 215 [1848] and SW 454: "The esthetic hero is great by *conquering*, the religious hero by *suffering*." Ironically, both Pascal and Feuerbach agreed that, "[s]uffering is a Christian's natural condition." [SW 460]

<sup>904</sup> TM 289. See also PC 171.

<sup>905</sup> TM 289.

such abject injustice.<sup>906</sup> Hence, he once paradoxically mused: "Truly Christianity does not want to force anyone. No, but Christianity wants its followers, suffering, to force the world to become Christian."<sup>907</sup> The greatest endorsement of spiritual authority is martyrdom for the Gospel, which not only conveys the conviction of the witness,<sup>908</sup> but also highlights the impotence of sensate authority in eradicating belief,<sup>909</sup> and the wickedness of society.<sup>910</sup> Due to the unflinching refusal to compromise in the face of death, "Christianity became power, power, became the power that was able to transform the world."<sup>911</sup> Hence, Kierkegaard triumphantly proclaimed, "In suffering, bold confidence is able to take power from the world and has the power to change scorn into honor, victory into downfall!"<sup>912</sup> As Nicoletti poignantly summarizes, "[R]eligion must relate itself inversely to politics, not through a direct superiority but through a 'suffering superiority'."<sup>913</sup>

#### b. True Equality: The Power of Love:

In addition to engendering persecution, which both strengthens the believer and ultimately weakens the opposing powers, spiritual authority has the effect of fostering universal equality in the sight of God. Because suffering on behalf of the truth merely emphasizes the heterogeneity of spiritual authority, and spiritual authority is freely available to all who follow Christ, the only person who can deny anyone from receiving spiritual authority is the person herself. In contrast to 'accidental' privileges such as an aristocratic birth or great intelligence, true earnestness-- the highest distinction securable

<sup>906</sup> TM 208, BA 234 [1848]. He observed that Christianity is both "the most tolerant of all religions insofar as it abhors most of all using physical force", as well as "the most intolerant of all religions, inasmuch as its true followers know no limits when it comes to suffering constraining others, constraining them by suffering their mistreatment and persecution." [TM 208]

<sup>907</sup> JP I 243 [1851]. On 'forcing the hand' of his adversaries, see WL [revised] 412 [1847]: "I will make them strike me. Thus I will still compel them with evil. For if they strike me first-- they will surely become aware [of their true wickedness]-- and if they kill me-- then they will become unconditionally aware, and I will have won absolute victory." He once compared the pastor's patience towards persecution to the [pre-anaesthetics] doctor's endurance of "the patient's abusive language and kicks during the operation." [PV 179 (1849)]

<sup>908</sup> PV 51.

<sup>909</sup> WA 74. Kierkegaard even (playfully?) mused over the possibility of his own martyrdom for disturbing the 'false peace' of Christendom. [CD 187]

<sup>910</sup> TC 203. For an 'extraordinary' person's death as "the victory of the new point of departure", see BA 154.

<sup>911</sup> FS 129.

<sup>912</sup> UV 331. This is another example of Christian revaluation via redemption whereby, "the language a whole race speaks in unanimous agreement is still turned upside down". [UV 333]

<sup>913</sup> Nicoletti 191.

by an individual-- stems from obeying God and, "[E]very human being, God be praised, is capable of it if he wills."<sup>914</sup> Kierkegaard emphasized that God judges individuals on the basis of who they become, not on biology or beginnings.<sup>915</sup> Subsequently, nobody is denied the possibility of living in love, "the strongest power in a man."<sup>916</sup> Moreover, the Danish thinker maintained that true distinction entails excelling at something which everyone can theoretically do, rather than distinguishing oneself in a proficiency in which few can participate. Thus, he exclaimed, "Is it really so glorious to become *the* superior person no one else can become; is it not disconsolate instead!"<sup>917</sup>

In proclaiming spiritual egalitarianism, Kierkegaard was remaining true to his Protestant heritage. Luther himself criticized the potential abuses and misunderstanding of an artificial dichotomy:

It has been devised that the Pope, bishops, priests and monks are called the spiritual estate; princes, lords, artificers and peasants are the temporal estate. This is an artful lie and hypocritical device, but let no one be made afraid by it, and for this reason: that all Christians are truly of the spiritual estate, and there is no difference among them, save of office alone.<sup>918</sup>

Unlike sensate power, talents, and knowledge, which elevate a person above the others, Kierkegaard claimed: "Love is not an exclusive characteristic, but it is a characteristic by which or in virtue of which you exist for others."<sup>919</sup> In light of Christ's commandment to 'love your neighbour', Kierkegaard regarded love as the great equalizer in the temporal world.<sup>920</sup> To transform one's enemy into one's friend and 'vanquish' them with love, Kierkegaard argued, is precisely what St. Paul meant by 'more than conquering'.<sup>921</sup> Nor does such temporally radicalizing love have its source in immanence. Hence, he maintained that, "kinship of all men is secured by every individual's equal kinship with and

<sup>914</sup> UV 123. See also SW 443, TA 62-63, and UD 335: "In the world of spirit, the only one who is shut out is the one who shuts himself out [...]"

<sup>915</sup> CD 26.

<sup>916</sup> WL 160.

<sup>917</sup> UV 226. Kierkegaard is massively indebted to Pascal on this point. See Pascal 75: "[T]he true good must be such that it may be possessed by all men at once without diminution or envy, and that no one should be able to lose it against his will."

<sup>918</sup> Luther *Documents* 43.

<sup>919</sup> WL 211. Cf. Luther *Documents* 50: "A Christian man is the most free lord of all, and subject to none, a Christian man is the most dutiful servant of all, and subject to everyone [...]"

<sup>920</sup> PV 111. See Westphal "Sociology" 150.

<sup>921</sup> UV 303.

relationship to God in Christ."<sup>922</sup>

Because everyone has an equal opportunity for actualizing "the possibility of the good at every moment",<sup>923</sup> Kierkegaard denigrated the withdrawal of hope for another person's eternal well-being as tantamount to 'spiritual murder'.<sup>924</sup> At the same time, Kierkegaard insisted that the neighbour cannot even be acknowledged prior to the life-transforming deflation of an individual's sinful autonomy: "It is only in dying to the joys and happiness of the world in self-denial that the 'neighbour' comes into existence."<sup>925</sup> As a 'spiritual' possession, therefore, love is an eternally renewable, eternally renewing resource.<sup>926</sup> Because of the inexhaustible reservoir of divine love which supplies each Christian, he maintained:

Already sin feels its powerlessness; it cannot withstand love any longer; it wants to tear itself away; then it insults love as painfully as possible, because it thinks that even love cannot forgive more than seven times. But see! Love could forgive seventy times seven times, and sin grew weary of occasioning forgiveness more quickly than love grew weary of forgiving.<sup>927</sup>

For Kierkegaard, then, Christian love can never be defeated-- it can only be fled.

<sup>922</sup> WL 80, 158; UV 85. Practising love, however, is still no escape from persecution "in a world which crucified him who was love". [WL 339]

<sup>923</sup> WL 239. Those who lack material goods are at no disadvantage with regards to faith, [CD 157] nor are those who possess less intelligence. [UP I 160] Faith is an equal opportunity for all, since nobody comes to God on their own strength or merit. [UP I 383]

<sup>924</sup> This explains his fascinating exegesis of Matthew 5:21-22, forbidding hatred of one's brother: "Even if one does not take murder upon his conscience, he nevertheless gives up the hated one as hopeless and consequently takes possibility away from him. But does this not mean to kill him spiritually." [WL 240]

<sup>925</sup> WL 359-360 n. 17. For 'worldly' love as self-centredly "preferential", see WL 58. The command to love does seem a bit ludicrous, then, for it comes 'naturally' to a Christian anyway [WL 344] and non-Christians are incapable of 'genuine' love to begin with. [WL 132]

<sup>926</sup> CD 116. To avoid any pejorative dualism, Kierkegaard once defined temporal possessions as "less perfect spiritual goods." [CD 119] Kierkegaard believed that, "it is love that preserves difference, because love does not seek its own but what is the neighbour's". [JP IV 181 (1851)] See also UD 143 on "the divine equality that opens the soul to the perfect and blinds the sensate eye to the difference, the divine equality that like a fire burns ever more intensely in the difference without, however, humanly speaking, consuming it."

<sup>927</sup> UD 64. See also SW 384, UD 380.

#### 4. Positions of Spiritual Authority:

##### a. The Apostle:

After examining the general characteristics of spiritual authority, it is necessary to discuss the two primary positions of spiritual authority for Kierkegaard. On account of his insistence upon Christianity's heterogeneity with the sensate world and its intrinsic power hierarchies, he believed that it is categorically erroneous to distinguish oneself as an "extraordinary Christian",<sup>928</sup> for one can not possess faith "in an *extraordinary* degree, since the ordinary degree is the highest".<sup>929</sup> Because everyone is spiritually equal before God, nobody can introduce qualitative distinctions between followers of Christ. However, throughout history, God has freely chosen to communicate himself directly to specific individuals whereby, "God empowers a particular human being, makes him his instrument."<sup>930</sup> Kierkegaard adopted the New Testament designation, "apostle", to describe such individuals.<sup>931</sup>

Kierkegaard did not relegate the apostolic office to the canonical past, nor is it entirely insensitive to its specific historical context. Hence, he once wrote:

In our age, just as in every previous one, there can indeed be true extraordinaries appointed by God. But the world's changes will still have a great influence on the outer appearance, even though the essence remains the same. Accordingly, for example, it would be suspicious if in our time a prophet appeared who resembled one of the ancient ones right down to the beard.<sup>932</sup>

As Stephen Dunning adroitly observes, the apostle is "present" in two ways: by being present and involved in contemporary life, and by living consciously and humbly in the

<sup>928</sup> TM 421 [1852]. Though Kierkegaard could be inconsistent on this point. See BA 150, where he distinguished the 'ordinary' individual from the 'extraordinary' through whom God 'brings a new point of departure for the established order', and PV 120 where he dismissed his own status as "a truth-witness in the stricter sense".

<sup>929</sup> WL 48.

<sup>930</sup> TM 424 [1853].

<sup>931</sup> H. H. defined an apostle as "a man who is called and appointed by God and sent by him on a mission." [WA 95] Apostles were by no means faultless. See TM 605-606 [August 23, 1855], TM 457 [1854].

<sup>932</sup> BA 25. It is highly significant that Kierkegaard never upbraided Adolf Adler for claiming to have received a personal revelation. Instead, he criticized him for obfuscating the heterogeneous boundaries between transcendence and immanence by announcing that his 'revelation' needed further revision-- a mark of human origin. See Hustwitt 334-335.



'presence' of God.<sup>933</sup> In contrast to the religious poet, who relies on personal ability, the only 'prerequisite' for the apostle is "a noble and pure simplicity (which is the condition for being the instrument of the Holy Spirit)".<sup>934</sup> Hence, anyone can potentially be an apostle, if chosen by God.<sup>935</sup> H. H. insisted that attempts to regard apostles as religious 'geniuses' constitute categorical carelessness, where the 'essentially Christian' is fatuously relegated to the aesthetic sphere.<sup>936</sup> Nor is it possible to account for the apostle within the natural development of human thought or history:

**The apostle has something paradoxically new to bring, the newness of which, just because it is essentially paradoxical and not an anticipation pertaining to the development of the human race, continually remains, just as an apostle remains for all eternity an apostle, and no immanence of eternity places him essentially on the same line with all human beings, since essentially he is paradoxically different.**<sup>937</sup>

Unsurprisingly, the apostle seeks absolutely no support from either sensate authority or other temporal 'proofs'. H. H. contended that he possesses "no other evidence than his own statement, and at most his willingness to suffer everything joyfully for the sake of that statement": "[B]y using [...] power, he would define his endeavor in essential identity with the endeavor of other people, and yet an apostle is what he is only by his paradoxical heterogeneity, by having divine authority".<sup>938</sup> For this reason, the apostle never seeks to emulate sensate authority, but concerns himself primarily with his personal relationship with God.<sup>939</sup> Accordingly, the apostle must, therefore, faithfully convey his message without taking responsibility for any results, proclaiming:

<sup>933</sup> Dunning 27.

<sup>934</sup> TM 464 [1854]. This accounted for his derision of pulpit 'theatrics', [WA 104] criticism directed specifically at Nicolai Grundtvig. [BA 185]

<sup>935</sup> In a possible allusion to Peter, Kierkegaard wrote: "[T]he less promising the apostle was as a man the greater was the impression of divine authority granted to him [...]" [WL 126]

<sup>936</sup> WA 93.

<sup>937</sup> WA 94.

<sup>938</sup> WA 105. See also BA 154. In this sense, revelatory claims are "logically immune from objective confirmation". [Whittaker 83] Hamilton stumbles into the aesthetic fallacy by insisting that the divine messenger must "earn the right to speak in this way, say through his experience of suffering or despair, or through his moments of greatest joy-- or through both." [70]

<sup>939</sup> UV 334, BA 187, UD 330. Climacus asserted that the apostle is "a solitary man" who does not consult other apostles on what he should do. [UP I 57] Because of his unarticulated ecclesiology, Kierkegaard underemphasized the fact that the office of apostle is a gift from God for *building up the church*, and that church unity was a fundamental concern for the apostles in the New Testament, further exposing himself to Bishop Martensen's criticism of "Dr. S. Kierkegaard, whose Christianity is without Church and without history, and who seeks Christ only in the 'desert' and in 'private rooms.'" [TM 361]

[I]t is God himself or the Lord Jesus Christ who is speaking, and you must not become involved presumptuously in criticizing the form. I cannot, I dare not compel you to obey, but through the relationship of your conscience to God, I make you eternally responsible for your relationship to this doctrine by my having proclaimed it as revealed to me and therefore by having proclaimed it with divine authority.<sup>940</sup>

As John Whittaker explains, one corrective for the categorically impaired Rev. Adler is as follows: "To acknowledge their character as revelations, *he should have resided in them, expressing in his person the changed disposition which faithfulness requires*. Then *his own obedient example* would have effectively transmitted the authority by which he was, supposedly, called."<sup>941</sup>

Although he believed that he was supplying a vital corrective for the Danish church, Kierkegaard assiduously eschewed any personal claims of apostleship: "I am not an apostle or the like; I am a poetical-dialectical genius, personally and religiously a penitent."<sup>942</sup> He further elaborated:

I do not have an immediate God-relationship to appeal to, nor do I dare to say that it is God who directly contributes the thoughts to me, but that my relationship to God is a relationship of reflection, inwardness in reflection, since reflection is the predominant quality of my individuality [...]<sup>943</sup>

Whereas the apostle's authority stems directly from God regardless of any natural talents he possesses,<sup>944</sup> Kierkegaard's role as church "auditor" was based on 'ordinary'

<sup>940</sup> BA 177.

<sup>941</sup> Whittaker 87. Whittaker tends, however, to conflate the role of apostle and truth-witness. Hence, he observes of ministers, "All too frequently, however, they lack the genuine authority of apostolic witnesses, which comes from heartfelt compliance with the regulatory role of religious ideas." Kierkegaard would probably reiterate that apostles do not receive authority based on their authentic lifestyles-- apostles are imperfect people who just happen to be selected by God to receive a direct communication which is totally based on grace, not merit. Many of Whittaker's comments would fall under the classification of Religiousness A. See, for example, p. 93: "Genuine witnesses rest *themselves* in their beliefs, and by so doing they become new selves ('new beings'); and it is the impact of this self-confidence that leads others to re-examine themselves in the light of their teachings. For these witnesses appear to have found themselves [...]" Rather, Kierkegaard would insist that it is they who have been found!

<sup>942</sup> PV xv. He was partly motivated to publish explicitly non-religious works to prevent people from making this erroneous assumption, "something I am a very long way from being." [CD 418 (1848)] For his faith as "an approximation" of Christianity and not "true Christianity", see FS 208.

<sup>943</sup> PV 74.

<sup>944</sup> WA 95, BA 86-87. Because faith is not contingent upon 'having all the facts' of Jesus' life, Climacus [brazenly] proclaimed: "Even if the contemporary generation had not left anything behind except these words, 'We have believed that in such and such a year the god appeared in the humble form of a servant, lived and taught among us, and then died'-- that is more than enough." [PF 104]

intellectual prowess.<sup>945</sup> Subsequently, Kierkegaard could hone his message using human artistry and reason, since even his devotional writings were mere 'Christian addresses' and were, therefore, 'without divine authority'.<sup>946</sup>

b. The Truth-Witness:

i. Introduction: The Importance of Witness:

All human beings-- as well as apostles-- are called to lives of 'proper' pietism, "in the sense of witnessing for the truth and suffering for it".<sup>947</sup> If Christ received so brutal a reception, how can his followers expect better?<sup>948</sup> Kierkegaard's understanding of witness diverged from the classical Christian emphasis insofar as he deplored the evangelist's presumption that 'My soul is safe, so now I can preoccupy myself solely with saving others.'<sup>949</sup> Because grace can only be directly communicated by God himself, the witness was responsible for engaging in "ethical-religious communication", which 'depicts the requirement of ideality' in order to enhance an awareness of one's need for grace, as well as a refusal to take grace for granted.<sup>950</sup> Hence, Johannes de silentio insisted that, "[t]he true knight of faith is a witness, never the teacher".<sup>951</sup> The witness is, in no way, to exert power over his neighbours, since his reward is "to be satisfied with ruling over himself instead of over the world, to be satisfied as a pastor to be his own audience, as an author to be his own reader, etc."<sup>952</sup> The greatest Christian witness is the necessary correlation between word and deed, doctrine and praxis, an unwavering commitment to living the truth regardless of material advantage or disadvantage.<sup>953</sup> Hence, Kierkegaard contended:

<sup>945</sup> TM 463-464 [1854].

<sup>946</sup> In contrast to sermons, see WL 11.

<sup>947</sup> JP III 524 [1850]. His radical emphasis on identifying truth-witnesses and suffering led Bishop Martensen to accuse him of restricting the category to martyrs alone. [TM 361]

<sup>948</sup> FS 169, CD 172, UV 338. Moreover, the earthly comfort of Mynster and Martensen indicated precisely how little they acted as witnesses to the truth. [TM 6]

<sup>949</sup> TM 607 [August 23, 1855], UP I 454. For his deprecation of 'hell-fire' evangelism as 'aesthetic', see CD 192.

<sup>950</sup> PV 227 [1849].

<sup>951</sup> FT 80. As Quidam retorted [with doctoral candidates in mind, obviously!], "[F]ortunate is the person who is so sure of himself that he dares to accept money for teaching." [SW 258]

<sup>952</sup> TA 89.

<sup>953</sup> PV 119, FS 10.

“[T]he highest a person is capable of is to make an eternal truth true, to make it true that it is true-- by doing it, by being oneself the demonstration, by a life that perhaps will also be able to convince others.”<sup>954</sup>

As with the apostle, Kierkegaard emphasized personal boldness and existential solitude as distinguishing traits: “The qualification *truth-witness* is a very imperious and extremely unsocial qualification and scrupulously allows itself to be joined only with: being nothing otherwise. *Truth-witness* relates to Christianity’s heterogeneity with this world [....]”<sup>955</sup> He acknowledged that there is an element of paradoxical pride in dissociating oneself from others: “Christian humility, as with everything Christian, involves a dialectic, so that its humility presupposes a pride which carries its head higher than proud human humility but which then humbles itself.”<sup>956</sup> Although the Christian boasts a superior ‘power source’, her authority is dedicated to uplifting, not overthrowing, those around her. Hence, Kierkegaard declared: “But all true helping begins with a humbling. The helper must first humble himself under the person he wants to help and thereby understand that to help is not to dominate but to serve [....]”<sup>957</sup> Kierkegaard maintained that the truth-witness demonstrates ‘abilities’ which God has granted to everyone, should they choose to follow his ways.<sup>958</sup> Methods of bearing witness to the truth are as myriad as the individuals God calls, for “Christ doesn’t require everyone to become *the disciples*.”<sup>959</sup> Hence, he once mused: “No, there is not one person alive who shares my task, and, in my opinion, not one person among these millions shares a task with another [....]”<sup>960</sup> Because every individual must pursue the truth in an individually truthful manner, intellectual Christians are not to castigate the simplicity of other believers, nor are the ‘simple’ to indulge in anti-intellectual elitism.<sup>961</sup>

<sup>954</sup> CD 98. Kierkegaard sought to avoid both cheap grace and works righteousness. Hence, he emphasized: “No, infinite humiliation and grace, and then a striving born of gratitude-- this is Christianity.” [FS xi]

<sup>955</sup> TM 10. On the heterogeneity between truth-witnessing and “politics”, see PV 109.

<sup>956</sup> JP IV 176 [1854]. On Kierkegaard’s ‘belonging’ to the lower classes, see TM 346, PV 90, 120.

<sup>957</sup> PV 75.

<sup>958</sup> JP VI 535 [1854]. See TC 195, where Kierkegaard lauded the ability “to be consistent to the uttermost, humble before God, proud toward men, which, God be praised, God has granted to every human being if he wills it.” See also TA 92.

<sup>959</sup> FS 99. Though all must become disciples. [FS 207] See also CD 186.

<sup>960</sup> JP VI 535 [1854].

<sup>961</sup> UP I 228. Hence, in his own life, writing became more than a vocation but a means of living the truth Christianly, Kierkegaard’s “divine worship”. [PV 73] However, he also claimed to possess “too much

## ii. Responding to Context: Task of the Truth-Witness:

In order for the truth-witness to bear humble yet relevant testimony, she must respond carefully to her particular historical and cultural context:

Above all, generality is not for upbuilding, because one is never built up in general, any more than a house is erected in general. Only when the words are said by the right person in the right situation in the right way, only then has the saying done everything it can to guide the single individual to do honestly what one otherwise is quick enough to do-- to refer everything to oneself.<sup>962</sup>

For Kierkegaard, human history is characterized by movements which veer between extremes: "[A]s Luther says, the world continues to be like the drunken peasant who, helped up on one side of the horse, falls off the other side."<sup>963</sup> During the Romantic period, society sought representative individuals who fully embodied its ideals and conventions, whereas the Enlightenment responded to the excesses of powerful individuals by advocating a "cosmopolitan system" which attempted to unify diverse elements.<sup>964</sup> Subsequently, Kierkegaard viewed his theological task as supplying a counter-balance or "corrective" to contemporary extremes.<sup>965</sup> Such a "pendulum swing" is particularly pronounced when a culture is preoccupied with "finite objectives", Kierkegaard contended, which results in a bi-polar fixation between "craving (for the fortunate)" and "despair (for the unfortunate)"; therefore, the proper Christian response is that, "eternity should be continually introduced counteractingly."<sup>966</sup>

Kierkegaard maintained that Christianity itself is not exempt from the pendulous exaggerations of the prevailing culture and must, therefore, continuously adjust its message accordingly since, "[T]he ensuing corruption always corresponds proportionately to what is introduced."<sup>967</sup> Further imbalances result when previous correctives are transformed into universal, authoritative truths regardless of changing contexts.<sup>968</sup> Hence,

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imagination and much too much of the poet to dare to be called a truth-witness in the stricter sense." [PV 120]  
<sup>962</sup> UD 276.

<sup>963</sup> JP III 727 [1846-1847].

<sup>964</sup> JP IV 19 [March 1836].

<sup>965</sup> JK 200 [1850]. For 'corrective' as "prophetic utterance", see Aiken 31.

<sup>966</sup> JP VI 202 [1855].

<sup>967</sup> JP VI 531 [1854].

<sup>968</sup> See, for example, his criticism of Luther's endorsement of marriage: "In this context it is distressing to me



he once wrote: "Lutheranism is a corrective-- but a corrective made into the normative, into the sum total, is *eo ipso* confusing in the following generation (where that for which it was a corrective does not exist [...])"<sup>969</sup> Spiritual laziness had partially contributed to redefining 'faith' as unthinking intellectual assent to a set of abstractified tenets safely removed from practical daily living, a religion by rote. For this reason, Kierkegaard advocated the provisional nature of Christian doctrine, which must remain relevant and explicitly counterbalance the contextual exaggeration of its contemporary *sitz im leben*.

Kierkegaard's willingness to set aside significant doctrines would have alarmed more conservative dogmatists. For example, he was perfectly willing to divert attention from the salvific role of Christ's death to focus on Christ as exemplar in order to inflate the bargain prices of 'cheap grace' which permeated the indolent church:

The misfortune of Christianity is clearly that the dialectical factor has been taken from Luther's doctrine of faith so that it has become a hiding-place for sheer paganism and Epicureanism; people forget entirely that Luther was urging the claims of faith against a fantastically exaggerated asceticism.<sup>970</sup>

Due to the withering religiosity which arose from contemporary biblical studies, he once quipped: "In the main a reformation which sets the Bible aside would have just as much validity now as Luther's breaking with the pope."<sup>971</sup> Near the end of his life, he even criticized Protestantism itself as a necessary correction for a certain time which was then wrongfully institutionalized.<sup>972</sup>

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that an eminent person like Luther came to such an erroneous position. He should have understood that his marriage was an exceptional act, a corrective [...]" [JP IV 578 (1854)].

<sup>969</sup> TM 452 [1854].

<sup>970</sup> JK 166 [1849]. See also JP I 325 [1849], FT 121. Kierkegaard believed that Luther had rightly responded to medieval monasticism, which had reduced faith to a series of 'petty observances'. [FS 16] However, the institutionalization of Luther's emphasis on 'grace alone' culminated in a spiritual laxity which took grace for granted. [FS 194-195] Hence, Kierkegaard asserted: "When the 'monastery' is the deviation, faith must be affirmed, when 'professor' is the deviation, imitation must be affirmed." [FS 195] He once qualified his own exaggerated emphasis on the individual to counteract the corrupted communitarianism of his day: "[E]stablishing a party and forming a school may be something inferior to what I am doing [...] and it can be something superior, as with Socrates and Christ. It depends on the situation in which or the stage at which a person does it." [JP IV 191 (1854)] In supplying a corrective to Kierkegaard's corrective, one might posit: 'When "society" is the deviation, the individual must be affirmed, but when "self" is the deviation, community must be affirmed.' Another contextual exaggeration, the Hegelian appropriation of *Geist*, may have partially contributed to Kierkegaard's understated pneumatology.

<sup>971</sup> JP I 84 [1848].

<sup>972</sup> TM 41. Kierkegaard's 'dialectical dogmatics' could be construed as an argument for relativism, were it not for his assiduously maintained core of theological non-negotiables: notably, the character of God, human

Ultimately, contextual exaggeration is paradoxically the proper response to contextual exaggeration. In contemplating the backlash to his 'anti-communitarianism', Kierkegaard responded:

The person who is to provide the 'corrective' must study the weak sides of the established order scrupulously and penetratingly and then one-sidedly present the opposite-- with expert one-sidedness [...] Nothing is easier for the one providing the corrective than to add the other side; but then it ceases to be precisely the corrective and itself becomes the established order.<sup>973</sup>

He also forewarned future readers not to misjudge his polemical stridency: "You have scarcely any idea of the degree to which the whole established ecclesiastical order is, Christianly, an untruth, and, what makes it worse, the degree to which the persons involved are themselves aware of it. Therefore, judge slowly if you see me press so hard [...]"<sup>974</sup> In response to the contemporary over-simplification of Christianity and its demands, the Danish theologian deliberately wrote to make things 'more difficult'. His purpose was partially to fend off potential 'followers', partially to avoid igniting a false 'external' reform.<sup>975</sup> This strategy also ensured that 'that single individual' did not place her trust in yet another human doctrine or teacher, but solely upon God. As Frater Taciturnus contended, "[B]elieving is just like swimming, and instead of helping one ashore the speaker should help one out into the deep."<sup>976</sup> Perhaps Kierkegaard even consciously or unconsciously reprised the role of Abraham in *Fear and Trembling* by playing the theological 'bogyman' for the benefit of the next generation, reasoning that, "it is better that he believes me a monster than that he should lose faith in you [God]."<sup>977</sup>

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sinfulness, creation *ex nihilo*, the heterogeneity of Christianity, the full deity and humanity of Christ, the need for self-risk and sacrifice among believers. Climacus carefully differentiated the religious dialectic from the Hegelian dialectic which rendered everything "sophistically relative (this is mediation)". [UP I 525]

<sup>973</sup> TM 403 [1849].

<sup>974</sup> TM 525 [1855]. See also UV 340.

<sup>975</sup> See UP I 186 and CD 385 [November 20, 1847]: "As long as I am living, I cannot be acknowledged, for only a few are able to understand me, and if people began trying to acknowledge me, I would have to exert all my powers in new mystifications to prevent it."

<sup>976</sup> SW 443. See also PC 289 [1849].

<sup>977</sup> FT 11.

### iii. Indirect Communication: The Means of the Truth-Witness:

Although the Christian's life revolves on bearing witness to the truth, Kierkegaard carefully qualified this witness within the rubric of indirect communication. If the predominant philosophical problem facing Socrates was, 'How does a man learn something he doesn't know and therefore cannot recognize?',<sup>978</sup> the ultimate Kierkegaardian quandary was, 'How does a man teach another individual something that is intrinsically 'unthinkable' and can only be learned from God?'<sup>979</sup> How can the eternal be conveyed in temporal formulations without compromising its heterogeneity with the contingent world and merging with paganism?<sup>980</sup> As a further corollary, 'In an age where external authority has been thoroughly corrupted and mistrusted, how does a man oppose sensate authority without himself becoming a sensate authority?'<sup>981</sup> Hence, as Climacus lamented the rise of populist leaders, he exclaimed:

The unrecognizable recognize the servants of levelling but dare not use power or authority against them, for then there would be a regression, because it would be instantly obvious to a third party that the unrecognizable one was an authority, and then the third party would be hindered from attaining the highest.<sup>982</sup>

How does a Christian teach people to think for themselves without enslaving them to his instruction: 'We should think for ourselves because Kierkegaard says so'? Likewise, how can he, in good conscience, 'command' them to be individuals?<sup>983</sup>

Despite the fact that direct communication is appropriate for conveying temporal information, as well as previously unknown truths, in the case of the apostle,<sup>984</sup> Kierkegaard believed that it is impossible for one individual to communicate truth directly

<sup>978</sup> PF 9.

<sup>979</sup> In Vigilius' words, to 'allow thought to collide with the unthinkable'. [CA 27]

<sup>980</sup> UP I 243.

<sup>981</sup> On Kierkegaard's strategy of confounding professorial or institutionalized pastoral authority, see Armstrong 27-31.

<sup>982</sup> UP I 109. Hannay posits, "The age needs Socratic leadership, leaders who disown authority and help the individual, less by attraction than repulsion, to become autonomous." [287]

<sup>983</sup> This plight is marvellously depicted in *Monty Python's Life of Brian*, when Brian, the reluctant 'messiah', shouts at his unwa(rra)nted followers, "You are all individuals!" to which they bray, "We... are... all... individuals..." After a brief pause, a paradoxical voice squeaks, "I'm not!" This is a likely candidate for Kierkegaard's favourite cinematic moment.

<sup>984</sup> UP I 76, 243. Though the apostle must be careful lest "the believer would enter into a direct relation to him, not into a paradoxical relation." [BA 186]

to another individual for five reasons. First, given the heterogeneity between God and sinful humankind, an individual can only recognize the truth after she first receives the condition for receiving truth-- a condition which God alone can bestow.<sup>985</sup> Second, no Christian may be so self-assured that she can neglect her personal pursuit of the truth and focus upon others since, "[T]here can be no schoolmaster, strictly understood, in the art of existing."<sup>986</sup> Third, intimations of 'direct' communication of truth translate into sensate power, which ineluctably indebt the learner to the human 'teacher' instead of God. Hence, Climacus asserted:

[T]he secret of communication specifically hinges on setting the other free, and for that very reason he must not communicate himself directly; indeed, it is even irreligious to do so [...] if the communicator is not God himself or does not presume to appeal to the miraculous authority of an apostle [...]<sup>987</sup>

Otherwise, instead of proclaiming 'good news to the poor, healing to the broken-hearted, freedom for the captives',<sup>988</sup> further fear, obligation, and dismay are generated.<sup>989</sup> Hence, Kierkegaard meticulously heeded Socrates' crucial lesson: "[T]here is no direct relation between the teacher and the learner".<sup>990</sup> Fourth, the direct communication of Christian truth without apostolic warrant negates existential immediacy and tends towards abstraction, robbing truth of its 'inward' urgency towards decisive action.<sup>991</sup> As Aiken observes, "[A]ny attempt to impart Christianity by direct means of communication, such as professional lecturing, is a 'monstrous error', insofar as evangelical truth is not a

<sup>985</sup> PF 14-15, UD 136. Hence, he vehemently opposed any notion that Jesus' divinity was eminently recognizable otherwise, "he is *eo ipso* a mythological figure." [UP I 600]

<sup>986</sup> UP II ix. See also UP I 74. However, Kierkegaard felt confident that he was applying the proper corrective: "That I have understood the truth I am presenting-- of that I am absolutely convinced." [PV 25]

<sup>987</sup> UP I 74.

<sup>988</sup> Isaiah 61:1.

<sup>989</sup> See UD 15: "If by my wishing or by my gift I could bestow upon him the highest good [...] then I could also take it from him, even if he would not have to be afraid of that." Hence, he concluded: "[N]o human being can give an eternal resolution to another or take it from him; one human being cannot be indebted to another." [UD 382] See also PF 12.

<sup>990</sup> UP I 247. See also PF 10. The epistemological humility of Socrates' maieutic method strongly influenced Kierkegaard's model of indirection. See TM 341 [September 1, 1855]: "The only analogy I have before me is Socrates; my task is a Socratic task, to audit the definition of what it is to be a Christian-- I do not call myself a Christian (keeping the ideal free), but I can make it manifest that others are even less so." Following Socrates' precedent was also contextually appropriate, given the proliferation of "sophistry" which plagued both ancient Greece and modern Christendom. [TM 341 (September 1, 1855)]

<sup>991</sup> UP I 236. This was a favourite tactic of Christendom, according to Kierkegaard. [PV 52] On account of the apostolic precedent, whereby knowledge of God can be communicated directly to individuals, I would want to qualify Golomb's contention that Kierkegaard relied on indirection due to the linguistic limitations of language which faith 'suspends' in delimiting the authority of rationality. ["Ladder" 65-66] On indirection as

possession of the mind but a form of being."<sup>992</sup> Fifth, direct communication may fatally disrupt the listener's appropriation of the message by focusing attention upon the messenger.<sup>993</sup> It is as fatuous as shouting, 'Watch what you're doing!' to a person using a chainsaw, who immediately looks up, maiming herself in the process.<sup>994</sup> This constituted Kierkegaard's problem with identifying ethical 'geniuses': "People should not admire an ethicist; they should be precipitated by him into an ethical life."<sup>995</sup>

The solution to Kierkegaard's great dilemma was, "[I]n suffering to serve, to help indirectly."<sup>996</sup> In order to love the beloved without imprisoning him in dependence upon the lover, Kierkegaard posited: "[T]he greatest benefaction cannot be accomplished in any way whereby the recipient gets to know that he is indebted [...]"<sup>997</sup> Without a direct relationship, Anti-Climacus claimed that there is no assertion of power on the part of the author: "There is no direct communication and no direct reception: there is a choice. It does not take place, as in direct communication with coaxing and threatening and admonishing [...]" [T]o deny direct communication is to require faith [...]"<sup>998</sup>

Kierkegaard's personal strategy for implementing indirect communication had three components. First, he assiduously ensured that there were no direct dogmatic statements in his writings: "I do not have a stitch of doctrine-- and doctrine is what people want. Because doctrine is the indolence of aping and mimicking for the learner, and doctrine is the way to sensate power for the teacher, for doctrine collects men."<sup>999</sup> Second, Kierkegaard strove to remain personally enigmatic and politically aloof, eschewing direct

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"a strictly preludial function", see Norris 89.

<sup>992</sup> Aiken 24.

<sup>993</sup> UV 160-161, UP I 100.

<sup>994</sup> See UP I 277.

<sup>995</sup> WL [revised] 422 [1847].

<sup>996</sup> UP I 109.

<sup>997</sup> WL 256.

<sup>998</sup> PC 140-141. See also PF 103.

<sup>999</sup> JP VI 535 [1854]. Hence, reducing Christianity to "an objective doctrine" helps render it "a kingdom of this world." [FS 171] This also accounts for Climacus' injunction not to cite his book authoritatively in a direct quote since this missed the crucial point of indirection. [UP I 618] Holmer writes, "In this respect, he was not an originating thinker; for he was not carrying further the thought of the age and he was not suggesting an unheard of mutation. Therefore, his works spoke to the age and yet were not what the age required." [82] Furthermore, emphasis on doctrine is both detrimental to Kierkegaard's project of emphasizing praxis over intellectually acknowledged 'beliefs' and also unnecessary: "My position has never



relations with foes and followers alike,<sup>1000</sup> and he vigorously renounced all authoritative titles and 'heroic' feats. Hence, he once wrote: "[W]hen he [an author] says: I am a poet, only a poet-- he is saying: Look at me and see that I am not great, I am not the ideal-- but look at the ideal."<sup>1001</sup> Third, Kierkegaard concocted a pantheon of pseudonymous speakers. As Louis Mackey explains, "A Kierkegaardian pseudonym is a *persona*, an imaginary person created by the author for artistic purposes, not a *nom de plume*, a fictitious name used to protect his personal identity from the threats and embarrassments of publicity [...]. [H]is purpose was not mystification but distance."<sup>1002</sup> However, the pseudonyms do assist in preserving mystery to great religious effect, as Kodalle observes: "[T]he existential center of the individual remains a mystery, kept intentionally from the inquisitive looks of others. Making it communicable would jeopardize the possibility of the absolute individuality of the other, who has the task of finding his own unique path."<sup>1003</sup>

These existential personas presented spiritual truths beneath 'aesthetic' camouflage,<sup>1004</sup> enabling Kierkegaard artistically to embody world views which were not representative of his own Christian understanding,<sup>1005</sup> and further protecting him from

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been an emphasis on 'doctrine:' my view is that the doctrine is very sound." [JP VI (1851) 402-403]

<sup>1000</sup> For example, JP IV 186 [1851]: "All who want to help me promptly mess up my cause by making it partisan in one direction or the other, and therefore I cannot use them." See also BA 336 [March 1855]: "I am not very directly understandable and will never be understood by those who want to have anything direct." He believed that such distancing was pivotal for the apostle Paul. [WL 337] Kierkegaard triumphantly claimed to have removed all overtly personal references from his papers. [JP V 226 [1843].

<sup>1001</sup> JP IV 178 [1851].

<sup>1002</sup> Cited in FT x-xi n. 3. There was a certain degree of theatricality involved, as Kierkegaard strove to appear publicly as an 'idler' to avert suspicion that he was vigorously engaged in writing at the time. [PV 61] Kirmmse estimates that the "cultivated audience" to which Kierkegaard would have been known consisted of three to four thousand people maximum. [Golden 79] It is somewhat comical to envision Kierkegaard's towering Saul-like figure vainly attempting to conceal itself behind the sparse 'baggage' of contemporary Danish literature.

<sup>1003</sup> Kodalle 402. For the pseudonyms as "therapeutic method", see Gardiner "Kierkegaard" 238.

<sup>1004</sup> Kierkegaard attributed the idea for the pseudonyms to Schleiermacher's written experimentation, [CI 425 (October 1835)] and probably styled his epistemological approach after Christ's parables, which stymied his opponents while offering illumination "to the person who is honestly seeking." [PV 34] Ziolkowski suggests that similar narrative conventions in Cervantes' *Don Quixote* influenced this strategy. [133] Kierkegaard wrestled with the ethics of willingly 'deceiving others into the truth'. [PV 7] In an 1848 entry, he identified "the arts of the maieutic" as an "unchristian way [...] even though useful for a time and relatively justified simply because Christendom has become paganism." [CD 422 (1848)]

<sup>1005</sup> FT x. For Kierkegaard's 'representational perspectivism' via the pseudonyms, see Pattison 238-241. Hamilton posits that the "collapse of Christian metaphysical tradition" which removed the "conceptual bite" from theological terms necessitated Kierkegaard's indirection. [68] Though I agree with Hamilton's analysis

direct relationships with his readers.<sup>1006</sup> This tactic involved topics as well as perspectives in order to 'lure' aesthetically minded readers to his explicitly religious writings.<sup>1007</sup> Since Christendom revelled under the illusion that all were Christians,<sup>1008</sup> Kierkegaard dismissed any direct assault, since it "only strengthens a person in the illusion and also infuriates him", and maintained: "[O]ne who is under illusion must be approached from behind [...]"<sup>1009</sup> Because Danish 'Christians' were existentially 'choking' on undigested 'truth',<sup>1010</sup> Kierkegaard sought to perform a hermeneutical 'Heimlich manoeuvre' to dislodge the obstruction. There was also a subtle polemic in his methods of indirection: by 'wholeheartedly' inhabiting an opposing ideal within a poetic personage, Kierkegaard was able to expose its intrinsic short-comings. Hence, he explained his 'motif operandi' behind Johannes Climacus as follows:

By means of the melancholy irony, which did not consist in any single utterance on the part of Johannes Climacus but in his whole life, by means of the profound earnestness involved in a young man's being sufficiently honest and earnest enough to do quietly and unostentatiously what the philosophers say (and he thereby becomes unhappy)-- I would strike a blow at *modern speculative philosophy*.<sup>1011</sup>

The pseudonyms, thus, supplied a series of 'masks', each of which allows the truth-seeking reader to adopt imaginatively an existential life view, realize its limitations from an 'insider's' perspective,<sup>1012</sup> and safely discard it without incurring any detrimental consequences in actuality.

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that Kierkegaard is perennially confronting the problem of how to speak with authority, his motivation is not merely an aversion to "being just another empty voice" [69], but also to avoid becoming a sensate authority which impedes others by attempting to mediate another individual's relation to God.

<sup>1006</sup> SW 648 [1845]. In the case of Anti-Climacus' heightened Christian ideal, Kierkegaard could "regard myself as a *reader* of the books, not as the author." [PV 12] Authorial 'silence' is reflected in the names of Johannes de silentio and Frater Taciturnus: "Silence here means the humorous revocation of the teleological relation." [BA 87] For the 'kenotic' aspects of the aesthetic writings, see PV 25, 77.

<sup>1007</sup> PV 44: "[T]he religious author first of all must try to establish rapport with people. That is, he must begin with an esthetic piece." See also TM 130. Hence, he was wary of giving too many clues into his methods: "A fisherman would not tell the fish about his bait, saying 'This is bait.'" [PV 182 (1849)]

<sup>1008</sup> PV xi.

<sup>1009</sup> PV 43. See also UP II 157 [1849-1850] and BA 142, where he cautioned against revivalist 'thundering' "which can so easily embitter people instead of bettering them."

<sup>1010</sup> UP I 275.

<sup>1011</sup> PF xiii.

<sup>1012</sup> Westphal calls it, "the determinate negation of positions which cannot survive the critical scrutiny of being compared to their own, self-imposed standards." ["Politics" 323] Rumble contends that Kierkegaard's purpose is "not so much to present the reader with various existential possibilities as to render the dynamic of

## 5. Reforming Temporality:

In a journal entry, Kierkegaard once warned that there were two perils in attempting to influence people: "(1) men are lukewarm and indolent, difficult to set in motion; (2) once they are set in motion, there is nothing they are more inclined to do than to mimic."<sup>1013</sup> Although he remained suspicious of external reform, contending that it typically distracted individuals from true reform-- the reform of each individual through a personal and 'inward' relationship with God<sup>1014</sup>-- and fostered "this disastrous confusion of politics and Christianity", <sup>1015</sup> he carefully qualified his position:

Permit me to add the following, lest what I say be misunderstood, as if it were my view that Christianity consists purely and simply of putting up with everything in regard to external forms, without doing anything at all, as if Christianity did not know very well what is to be done [...] There are situations, therefore, in which an established order can be of such a nature that the Christian ought not put up with it, ought not to say that Christianity means precisely this indifference to the external.<sup>1016</sup>

Kierkegaard's challenging of *The Corsair's* unbridled media power<sup>1017</sup> and tireless demands for the separation of church and state comprise two such personal appeals for 'justified' external reform.

However, Kierkegaard's aversion to employing sensate authority for spiritual ends

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this conflict [between life views] on an external stage". [87]

<sup>1013</sup> JP III 727 [1847].

<sup>1014</sup> In "Politics", 334, Perkins observes that Climacus/ Kierkegaard inverts Plato's strategy that one ought to alter the state in order to produce a more desirable individual. Climacus contended that a person has as much likelihood of trying to restrain her era as a passenger 'trying to stop the train by clutching the seat ahead of him' [UP I 164-165] Furthermore, attempts to alleviate temporal differences [e.g., equitable distribution of goods, equal rights for women] are 'futile' as they are impossible to achieve and ironically inflated the importance of those differences. [TM 444-445 (1854), FS 131, PV 103-104, CD 60, WL 87, 139-140, 145; BA 158, 230; UP I 504, TC 57, UD 330] However, his admonitions to the poor to 'reconcile themselves to their position' [JP IV 181 (1851)] ring hollow, coming from a highly educated, independently wealthy European male who never had to work a day in this life. As Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn rightly observed, "How do you expect a man who's warm to understand one who's cold?" [23] Lowrie cites an entry dated Oct. 13, 1853, which expounds his long-standing belief that, "I should never be tried by having to work for my living-- partly because I thought that in consideration of my peculiar cross God would spare me this suffering and problem." [52] Gardiner observes, "While freely admitting of his extravagance, he insisted that his writing depended upon his living in a congenial style [...]" ["Introduction" 14]

<sup>1015</sup> TC 53.

<sup>1016</sup> TC 56. Hence, Kierkegaard moved beyond Luther's injunction: "For no one must oppose the authorities except He who has instituted them; for it is rebellion against God." [Documents 81]

<sup>1017</sup> Kierkegaard, thus, anticipates Derrida's indictment on media and public opinion. [Dooley 14-17]

strongly influenced his approach to temporal reforms. For this reason, he confessed, "I am indeed suspicious of these politically achieved free institutions, especially of their saving, renewing power."<sup>1018</sup> He scathingly criticized religious reformer Nicolai Grundtvig for employing government power to enact ecclesiastical reform, maintaining: "[H]e actually has fought only for something earthly, civil freedom for himself and his adherents."<sup>1019</sup> Although Kierkegaard admitted that God could anoint a particular individual to challenge the external order,<sup>1020</sup> he deemed it inappropriate to pine for such a leader,<sup>1021</sup> and chose to err on the side of conservatism: "[I]f there is no such man among us, then let us hold to the established order [...]"<sup>1022</sup> True reform transpires through personal sacrifices and voluntary suffering, which only the individual can choose for herself.<sup>1023</sup> Moreover, faith has to be worked out in living response to one's particular historical context. Hence, he once observed, "Christ did not come *in order to* abolish slavery, even though that will follow and does result from it [...]"<sup>1024</sup>

Amidst the traumatic political events of 1848, Kierkegaard once speculated on the possibility of a Christian society, which would only occur if God were related singly to every individual:

God now comes to be related to individuals neither through abstractions nor through representative individuals but becomes the one who, so to speak, takes it upon himself to bring up the generation's countless individuals, becomes himself the schoolmaster who watches over everyone, each one individually. Here thinking halts. The shape of the world would resemble-- well, I do not know to what I should compare it-- it would resemble an enormous Christianfeldt [...]"<sup>1025</sup>

With no small irony, he observed that "the two most powerful opponents"-- communism

<sup>1018</sup> TC 54. Johannes de silentio criticized much social activism as egotism masquerading as sympathy. [FT 80]

<sup>1019</sup> TM 208. See also WL 342 and Kirmmse *Golden* 221.

<sup>1020</sup> BA 150.

<sup>1021</sup> TA 89: "It will do no good to appeal to and summon a Holger Danske or a Martin Luther. Their age is past, and as a matter of fact it is indolence on the part of individuals to want such a one [...]"

<sup>1022</sup> FS 212-213. See also TM 444-445 [1854]: "I am-- in this respect-- so conservative that if I might have my way, not so much as one button will be changed on the assistant gravedigger's frock, even if the opposition ever so zealously insisted upon it."

<sup>1023</sup> BA 101.

<sup>1024</sup> UV 242.

<sup>1025</sup> WA 215 [1848]. This was a small town founded by the Moravian Brethren, with whom Kierkegaard's father and his friend Emil Boesen had connections. [WA 296 n. 18] Kierkegaard's description strongly echoes Old Testament prophecies of eschatological reform. Cf. Jeremiah 31:33-34; Isaiah 11:9, 54:13.



and pietism-- would offer similar visions for society, as both would insist:

[T]here must be no distinction between persons; we should be brothers and sisters, have everything in common; wealth, position, art, science, etc. are of evil; all people should be alike [...], dressed alike, [...] going to bed by the clock, eating the same food out of one dish in a definite rhythm, etc. etc.<sup>1026</sup>

Kierkegaard did not expand upon this societal vision, presumably to counterbalance the exaggerated clamour for political reform which was currently disrupting Danish society. Hence, he declared:

[W]hen existence itself undertakes to preach for awakening as it is doing now, I do not dare to jack it up even more in that direction; something extraordinary like that has not been entrusted to me and scarcely can be entrusted to any human being. In a soft, refined, overcultured time, I was and ought to be for awakening. At present I ought to draw nearer to the established order.<sup>1027</sup>

Hence, he continued to supply a politically 'conservative' corrective to the contextual exaggeration of his day by refusing to postulate further what a Christian society might look like. Kirmmse describes Kierkegaard as "a 'populist' in his view of culture and *Dannelse*, ["the education which forms character"]<sup>1028</sup> a pragmatic 'agnostic' in his view of political arrangements, and a 'liberal' with respect to his sink-or-swim individualistic notion of salvation."<sup>1029</sup> However, from the view point of sensate authority, it is surely an 'armed agnosticism', given the prioritization of the individual's relationship with God which supersedes all externalized political formations, his suspicion of populist power, and his endorsement of the early church's model of 'praying for the emperor' without subscribing to nationalist self-deifications or 'household gods'.<sup>1030</sup>

If one is to condemn Kierkegaard for failing to prescribe a thorough blueprint for

<sup>1026</sup> WA 216 [1848]. Perkins outlines general features of a 'Climacan' state in "Politics" 42.

<sup>1027</sup> WA 216-217 [1849].

<sup>1028</sup> Kirmmse *Golden* 273.

<sup>1029</sup> Kirmmse *Golden* 276. See also 327 where he discusses Kierkegaard's response to women's equal rights: "Here, as elsewhere, SK seems quite the classical liberal, non-dogmatic and agnostic with respect to political solutions, so long as they respect individual rights [...]" Similarly, Hannay deems him a "social nominalist" [300]-- as long as the political structures allow individuals to be "accountable personally for their bureaucratic actions and political decisions, the framework can be allowed to stand". [295]

<sup>1030</sup> To the degree that Kierkegaard remains 'agnostic' or indifferent towards political structures, many political and feminist theorists would interpret his posture as a tacit endorsement of the status quo and thus regard him as politically 'conservative'.



social change or government infrastructure, this reticence may be attributed in part to the 'over-politicization' of life in nineteenth-century Europe, the prevalence of false 'authority', the fear of initiating yet another misguided-- because solely exterior-- reform movement, and the Gospel's own precedent in obviating socio-political, ethnological distinctions, conventions, and structures in order to attend to the pressing spiritual needs common to every member of sinful humanity.<sup>1031</sup> Westphal identifies a passage from *Practice in Christianity* as "Kierkegaard's politics in a nutshell":

Every human being is to live in fear and trembling, and likewise no established order is to be exempted from fear and trembling. Fear and trembling signify that we are in the process of becoming; and every single individual, likewise the generation, is and should be aware of being in the process of becoming. And fear and trembling signify that there is a God-- something every human being and every established order ought not to forget for a moment.<sup>1032</sup>

Kierkegaard came closest to expounding a governing principle for forming such a society when he once wrote: "If Christianity is supposed to be culture, it must be the culture of character, or education and culture aimed at becoming persons of character."<sup>1033</sup>

According to Kirmmse, "The most general, basic rule SK lays down for ordering the religious-private and the political-social spheres in their proper relation is that one must relate infinitely only to the eternal."<sup>1034</sup>

One further note is necessary before concluding this chapter. A certain tension is implicit in the temporal/ sensate division. At times, spiritual authority appears as a purely 'transcendent' incursion into the world of temporality; the apostle apparently bears an utterly incommensurable authority from 'beyond'. However, in other instances, Kierkegaard wrote of spiritual authority as if it was a 'redeemed' version of 'sensate authority', which tends to downplay the 'Christian' 'chasm of incommensurability' between the divine and the created universe, and verges upon the Socratic 'maieutic' pattern. Are human beings passive recipients of spiritual authority or do they participate in

<sup>1031</sup> As Perkins observes, "Kierkegaard's vision of community is of a kingdom not yet come and so is open to multiple political interpretations." ["Critique" 217] This also places existential responsibility upon the reader to think up and implement strategies consistent with the Gospel. [See Perkins "Political" 36, and Hannay 278]

<sup>1032</sup> PC 88, cited in Westphal "Politics" 324.

<sup>1033</sup> FS 256 [1850]. See also Westphal "Politics" 331.

<sup>1034</sup> Kirmmse *Golden* 323.

the redemption or emancipation of sensate authority? Part of the incongruity is due to the artificiality of my terminological bifurcations, imposed in order to elucidate the dynamic components of an admirably sophisticated life view. However, part of the ambiguity is also based upon the fact that issues of freedom and authority involve a complex dialectic for Kierkegaard, who himself emphasized one side or the other depending on the context. When confronting the rebelliousness of sinful autonomy and the incursions of human rationality or nationalist politics into the sphere of Religiousness B, he adamantly upheld God's incommensurability with humankind and its self-serving interpretative schemas. However, concerning Christian responsibility towards the other, he accentuated the vital role of passionate commitment and altruistic involvement. Hence, in *Works of Love*, we read:

Therefore, giving thanks to God, he [the helper] declares: Now this individual is standing by himself-- through my help. But there is no self-satisfaction in the last phrase, because the loving one has understood that essentially every human being indeed stands by himself-- through God's help-- and that the loving one's self-annihilation is really only in order not to hinder the other person's God-relationship, so that all the loving one's help infinitely vanishes in the God-relationship.<sup>1035</sup>

Casting a sidelong glance at Hegel, Kierkegaard left no doubt as to the origins of Christian practice: "It certainly must never be forgotten that Christ also helped in temporal and earthly needs. It is also possible falsely to make Christ so spiritual that He becomes sheer cruelty. After all, 'spirit', absolute spirit, is the greatest of cruelties for us poor men'."<sup>1036</sup>

What is essential to understanding Kierkegaard is, first, to be cognizant of these two fundamental truths of divine initiation/ empowering and human participation which he endeavours to hold together in his comprehension of freedom within the contingent realm of creation. Second, we must recognize that Kierkegaard never conflated the Gospel with its socio-political applications and/ or Christian ethical practices.<sup>1037</sup> Within its prescriptive homilies and treatises, organized religion typically employs a 'slippery' intransitive: for example, 'To be before God *is* to minister to the poor.' In such formulations, caring for the poor or advocating universal rights can easily be equated with

<sup>1035</sup> WL (revised) 278.

<sup>1036</sup> From a 1849 journal entry cited in Sørensen 67-68.

standing before God, so that human activity tacitly supplants the role of divine grace upon which such activity is based. In his refusal to dictate prescriptive action, Kierkegaard strove to remind his contemporaries of the Gospel imperative to enter a right personal relationship with God-- possible only through the efficacy of Christ's life, death, and resurrection-- as the only proper grounds for passionate, 'existential' Christian praxis. Subsequently, he did not seek to question the value of social action but rather to situate it theologically as *following from* faith or being an *expression of* faith rather than being *confused for* or *equated with* faith, a common tendency within the 'aestheticization' of Christianity in nineteenth-century Denmark.<sup>1038</sup> Hence, the pith of his 'political' message is admirably summarized by Nicoletti: "[T]he political sphere cannot satisfy the needs of a being capable of infinity."<sup>1039</sup> Having thoroughly explored Kierkegaard's dichotomy of authority, the following chapters will provide a comparative analysis of Nietzsche's and Kierkegaard's positions.

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<sup>1037</sup> I owe this insight to an utterly indispensable 'eleventh-hour' dialogue with Prof. Alan Torrance.

<sup>1038</sup> Hence, Hamilton misinterprets Kierkegaard as advocating a 'religious spiritual stance of resignation'. [77] Against Hamilton, see Nicoletti 186-189. She concludes: "Mysticism wants to remove both finitude and politics; mundanity wants to remove infinity. To realize a real government it is necessary to retain the specificities of the two poles and their dialectical relation." [191]

<sup>1039</sup> Nicoletti 189.

## Chapter 6: Worlds Apart: Comparing Perspectives:

The following two chapters will attempt to reconstruct a dialogue between Nietzsche and Kierkegaard with regards to their cosmology, anthropology, and concepts of authority. The first half of each section will briefly outline Nietzsche's contentions with regards to Christianity and the second half will contain Kierkegaard's probable rejoinders and counter-criticism. The final chapter will examine some of the strengths and weaknesses of both positions and conclude with their relevance for contemporary discussions on power.

### I. Cosmological Objections: The Accusation of Cowardice:

Upon reviewing Nietzsche's corpus, there are two primary objections which he levelled at Christianity: the lack of objective truth in its tenets, and its devaluation of the temporal universe in light of otherworldly delusions.

#### A. Nietzsche:

##### 1. Christian Doctrine as Myth:

It is not surprising that Nietzsche would vehemently oppose the majority of Kierkegaard's postulations about the cosmos. Providence,<sup>1040</sup> sin,<sup>1041</sup> revelation,<sup>1042</sup> God,<sup>1043</sup> the Incarnation,<sup>1044</sup> salvation,<sup>1045</sup> and free will<sup>1046</sup> are all presuppositions which he resolutely rejected. According to Nietzsche, the human self consists of fractured

<sup>1040</sup> HA 77, BG 111, TI 137.

<sup>1041</sup> HA 76.

<sup>1042</sup> HA 88.

<sup>1043</sup> HA 89.

<sup>1044</sup> HA 84, 102.

<sup>1045</sup> BT 8; HA 85, Z 59, WP 212 [1888]. It is important to observe that Nietzsche's rejection of Christian tenets is not total. Like a hermit crab, he typically seized the emptied 'shell' of Christian doctrine when useful for his own 'pincer' movements. Hence, he formulated a secularized 'remnant theology' in which a humanly justified 'salvation' is accorded to a chosen few who shall transcend the ranks and rancour of the 'irredeemable' herd. On Christianity's usefulness for culling a more docile slave, see WP 127 [1887-1888].  
<sup>1046</sup> HA 26, 43; GS 169; WP 86 [1888], 357 [1883-1888]. He particularly opposed religions "when they themselves want to be final ends and not means beside other means." [BG 87]

inconsistencies, competing drives, and "a multiplicity of persons"<sup>1047</sup>, and constitutes the ultimate construction of the imagination.<sup>1048</sup> Christianity plays upon this composition, "raising to a principle the counterfeiting of psychological interpretation".<sup>1049</sup> Hence, he derided Christianity as:

A traffic between imaginary *beings* ('God', 'spirits', 'souls'); an imaginary *natural science* (anthropocentric; complete lack of the concept of natural causes); an imaginary *psychology* (nothing but self-misunderstandings, interpretations of pleasant or unpleasant general feelings, for example the condition of the *nervus sympathicus*, with the aid of the sign-language of religio-moral idiosyncrasy--'repentance', 'sting of conscience', 'temptation by the Devil', 'the proximity of God'); an imaginary *teleology* ('the kingdom of God', 'the Last Judgment', 'eternal life').<sup>1050</sup>

For Nietzsche, such postulations are merely man-made myths, existential 'night lights' to comfort frail-hearted individuals in a darkened cosmos devoid of divine love and purpose.<sup>1051</sup> Such 'truths' represent humankind's most 'endearing', enduring, even useful 'errors'.<sup>1052</sup>

According to Nietzsche, human beings remain hopelessly entrenched within their biological and historical context,<sup>1053</sup> not so much 'actor' as 'acted upon' by the inescapable forces and counter-forces which comprise the temporal realm.<sup>1054</sup> Within this environment, even self-knowledge becomes illusory.<sup>1055</sup> Nor does Nietzsche have any tolerance for the use of paradoxes to explain apparent inconsistencies: "[F]or what are paradoxes but assertions which carry no conviction because their author himself is not really convinced of them and makes them only so as to glitter and seduce and in general cut a figure."<sup>1056</sup>

In contrast to this existential cowardice which fails to face fully the harsh realities

<sup>1047</sup> WP 209 [1888].

<sup>1048</sup> WP 263-264 [1887-1888].

<sup>1049</sup> WP 94 [1887].

<sup>1050</sup> TI 137.

<sup>1051</sup> BT 22.

<sup>1052</sup> GS 219.

<sup>1053</sup> GS 121.

<sup>1054</sup> BT 18, GS 168.

<sup>1055</sup> UM 129.

<sup>1056</sup> UM 134.



of existence, Nietzsche found reason to celebrate, to triumph over the 'telos-lessness' of nature. The truly powerful man is able to accept unflinchingly this state of affairs, to recognize the arbitrariness of human formulations of truth, "to grasp that injustice is inseparable from life",<sup>1057</sup> to forsake his 'astrological pride',<sup>1058</sup> and transcend the challenges of existence. As Tanner explains, Nietzsche juxtaposed "unblinking recognition of the fruitfulness of life with a stubborn determination not to be subdued by it."<sup>1059</sup> By defiantly acting in the face of life's eternal 'ends-lessness', humankind faces fate with stentorian gravitas and nobility, simultaneously shaking a fist at the void while embracing its vicissitudes and vagaries with relish.

## 2. Christian Devaluation of Life:

Nietzsche remained hyperbolically suspicious of any doctrine which eroded significance from the natural world in favour of an illusory hereafter. The 'sin against life' is indubitably the 'unforgivable sin': "If one shifts the centre of gravity of life *out* of life into the 'Beyond' -- into *nothingness*-- one has deprived life as such of its centre of gravity."<sup>1060</sup> Such transcendental escapism engendered his unmitigated scorn for Christian "afterworldsmen".<sup>1061</sup> Nor would he admit any theological impediments to the free expression of man's natural instincts under the façade of heavenly ordinances. "For what is freedom?" he once asked: "That one has the will to self-responsibility."<sup>1062</sup> Subsequently, he rejected Christianity for attempting to imprison what is free, domesticate what is fierce, and foster "*hostility to life*, a furious, vindictive distaste for life itself".<sup>1063</sup> He explained:

Hatred of the 'world', the condemnation of the emotions, the fear of beauty and sensuality, a transcendental world invented the better to slander this one, basically a yearning for non-existence, for repose until the 'sabbath of Sabbaths'-- all of this, along with Christianity's unconditional resolve to acknowledge *only* moral values, struck me as the most dangerous and sinister of all possible manifestations

<sup>1057</sup> HA 9.

<sup>1058</sup> I.e., the belief that "the heavens revolve around the fate of man." [HA 16]

<sup>1059</sup> BG 16.

<sup>1060</sup> TI 167. See also HA 85, 230.

<sup>1061</sup> Z 59.

<sup>1062</sup> TI 103.

<sup>1063</sup> BT 8.

of a 'will to decline', at the very least a sign of the most profound affliction, fatigue, sullenness, exhaustion, impoverishment of life.<sup>1064</sup>

For Nietzsche, the Christian attempt to impose an ethical structure on the intrinsically amoral universe and its creation of a false psychology of guilt and fear inject a fatal poison into the veins of human vitality.<sup>1065</sup>

In light of these contentions, Nietzsche would probably accuse Kierkegaard of cocooning his existential fears within the 'swaddling clothes' of superstition and hermeneutical hocus-pocus: "When a misfortune strikes us, we can overcome it either by removing its cause or else by changing the effect it has on our feelings, that is, by reinterpreting the misfortune as a good, whose benefit may only later become clear."<sup>1066</sup> Moreover, he would have adduced Kierkegaard's sundry references to guilt and self-torment<sup>1067</sup> as symptomatic of Christianity's diseased, counterfeit psychology. As a proponent of nature, health, and happiness in material reality, the German philosopher subsequently sought to jolt the inert and lifeless human world with the defibrillators of "dangerous knowledge":

the emotions of hatred, envy, covetousness, and lust for domination as life-conditioning emotions, as something which must be fundamentally and essentially present in the total economy of life, consequently must be heightened further if life is to be heightened further.<sup>1068</sup>

He would likely cite several instances where the Danish thinker 'denigrated earthly life' by espousing 'hatred for the world' for the sake of chimerical eternal values, and upbraid their anti-naturalism.<sup>1069</sup> Kierkegaard would, thus, be a coward on two accounts: for rejecting the 'real' world of life and vitality, and for embracing an illusory world spawned by fear and escapism.

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<sup>1064</sup> BT 8-9.

<sup>1065</sup> BT 9.

<sup>1066</sup> HA 77. See also GS 196.

<sup>1067</sup> See, for example, TM 427 [1853], JP III 574 [1850], the centrality of despair in *The Concept of Anxiety* and *Sickness Unto Death*, and Quidam's assertion that he could not dispel his depression since it "becomes a religious point of departure." [SW 375]

<sup>1068</sup> BG 53.

## B. Kierkegaard:

## 1. Affinity:

Nietzsche's response would likely constitute a refreshing change for Kierkegaard. Unlike scores of self-styled 'Christians', Nietzsche's outrage at the preposterousness of Christianity indicated that the German philosopher better comprehended the Christian faith and its radical implications than many of its so-called adherents.<sup>1070</sup> Hence, in a journal entry, he mused: "[T]he state of Christianity has long been such that one cannot find out what Christianity is in the so-called Christian church [...] but has to seek it among the freethinkers."<sup>1071</sup> From Kierkegaard's viewpoint, Nietzsche's indignation at Christianity's hostility towards the amoral naturalism he espoused is both justified and understandable as the perspective of fallen humankind seeking utter independence from God.<sup>1072</sup> Because Christian revelation is completely incommensurable with human history, thought, and culture, it ineluctably aggravates the human spirit in its 'normative' quest to celebrate its own powers, standards, and creativity. For Kierkegaard, this means none other than taking offence at the Gospel, the 'natural' response of one who lives in defiant autonomy.<sup>1073</sup> In fact, Kierkegaard was more alarmed by a lack of offence in light of the Gospel, a sign of "a remarkable high degree of spiritlessness".<sup>1074</sup> Hence, in Kierkegaard's eyes, Nietzsche's response to Christianity was far from radical, but rather conventional and predictably 'human, all too human': "All of 'humankind's' sagacity aims at one thing: to be able to live without responsibility."<sup>1075</sup>

<sup>1069</sup> For example, TM 312, 335; WL 124; FT 292 [1843-1844].

<sup>1070</sup> On the heterogeneity of Christianity, see WA 100; SD 159; CD 63; WL 41; TM 10, 393 [1847]; BA 20, 175; UP I 100, 213-214; SW 440; CA 19; PF 36; FT 53. Kierkegaard separated the transcendent truth of the Gospel from the historical foibles of the church by affixing "an unshakable qualitative difference" between "the historical in Christianity, (the paradox that the eternal once came into existence in time, this paradoxical fact)" and the "history of Christianity". [BA 38]

<sup>1071</sup> JP VI 532 [1854].

<sup>1072</sup> TM 177. See also JK 254 [1854], CD 97, WL 340, JP III 733 [1851], UP I 461, and TM 335, where he described the true essence of Christianity as "hating oneself, to hate everything in which a person has his life, everything that for him is life, hating that for the sake of which he selfishly wants to make use of God in attaining it or in being comforted if he does not attain it or loses it".

<sup>1073</sup> FS 35, 140; PC 81, 94; SD 155, WL 70.

<sup>1074</sup> SD 149.

<sup>1075</sup> TM 350. Climacus was wary of counterfeit means for "finite common sense [...] to preach indulgence." [UP I 536]

Furthermore, Kierkegaard would have concurred with much of Nietzsche's diagnosis of 'diseased' Christendom, including the false psychological distortions which replace theological content with false sentiment,<sup>1076</sup> or the hypocrisy of self-love masquerading as love for spouse, society, and God.<sup>1077</sup> Kierkegaard also expressed disdain for otherworldly escapism which, he averred, represents a supreme "distrust in God" for provision in this life.<sup>1078</sup> Thus, Nietzsche would have served Kierkegaard as an ally both directly and indirectly. He would be an ally directly by critiquing the fallibility of human notions of love and ethics, as well as Christendom's fallacious representation of Christ's teachings:

[H]ow seldom Christianity is presented in its true form, how those who defend it most often betray it, and how rarely attackers actually hit it, although they often [...] superbly hit Christendom, which certainly might rather be called the caricature of true Christianity or an enormous quantity of misunderstanding, illusion, etc. sprinkled with a sparse little dash of true Christianity.<sup>1079</sup>

Nietzsche would offer indirect assistance by the offence he took at the 'unearthly' demands which the heterogeneous Gospel imposes upon every individual. Nietzsche thereby supplies what Pascal dubbed an 'indirect demonstration' of Christian truths by his 'natural' resistance to its 'otherworldly' demands.<sup>1080</sup>

## 2. Rebuttal:

Never one to pass up a polemical challenge, Kierkegaard would have subjected Nietzsche's cosmology to rigorous criticism and highlighted several crucial problems and inconsistencies.

### a. Christendom vs. Christianity:

Kierkegaard would first take issue with Nietzsche's underlying presupposition that

<sup>1076</sup> For example, attributing the gradual dissipation of strong emotions to 'divine forgiveness'. [HA 93]

<sup>1077</sup> HA 100; WL [revised] 473 [1847].

<sup>1078</sup> JP IV 52 [1840-1841]. See also FS 169, CD 261, JP IV 145 [1848], UP I 432, UD 259-260, CI 328-329, BA 212 [July 4, 1840].

<sup>1079</sup> PV 80.

<sup>1080</sup> Pascal 163-164.

Christendom equals Christianity.<sup>1081</sup> By contrast, he maintained that Christendom was the world's cunning method of overthrowing true Christianity.<sup>1082</sup> Kierkegaard carefully distinguished between immanent religiousness and the genuine religiousness of transcendence, though this was increasingly vanishing from Christendom.<sup>1083</sup> Furthermore, he would strongly contest Nietzsche's 'facile' equating Christianity with the desires and interests of the lowest classes of society. Rather, Christendom represented the non-Christian world's vanquishing of the church by plying it with temporal power and wealth-- a decisive tactic of those in affluent positions who were able to disseminate such privileges. Hence, the 'slaves' are not to blame for the church's plight:

But in 'Christendom' it is actually the favored ones who have taken possession of Christianity, the rich and powerful who in addition to all their enjoyment of life also want all their power and might and wealth interpreted as proof of God's grace and a sign of their piety [....]<sup>1084</sup>

Nor would Kierkegaard allow the admitted shortcomings of the visible church to excuse Nietzsche's unbelief, since, "I regard it as an illusion for someone to imagine that it is external conditions and forms that hinder him in becoming a Christian [....]"<sup>1085</sup> To the degree that Nietzsche was repelled by 'the good', he was trapped in a "demonic" relation of fear and opposition towards the good.<sup>1086</sup>

#### b. Mythological Creatures:

Nietzsche once criticized Christianity's belief in a 'non-existent' God by declaring, "There is not enough love and kindness in the world to permit us to give any of it away to imaginary beings."<sup>1087</sup> However, Kierkegaard would quickly point out that Nietzsche's alternative violated his own principle-- the emulation of an *über*-being who has yet to appear in world history.<sup>1088</sup> Hence, in *Works of Love*, Kierkegaard declared: "The shrewd

<sup>1081</sup> TM 107.

<sup>1082</sup> TM 188.

<sup>1083</sup> TM 39, UP I 555-556.

<sup>1084</sup> JP IV 408 [1852].

<sup>1085</sup> TC 54.

<sup>1086</sup> CA 119. Frater Taciturnus described Quidam as "a demoniac character in the direction of the religious."

[SW 398]

<sup>1087</sup> HA 89.

<sup>1088</sup> Z 117. Ironically, Hollingdale speculates that Nietzsche modeled his concept of the *Übermensch* after



foolishly think that one wastes his time in loving imperfect, weak men [...] But to be unable to find an object, to waste love in vainly seeking, to waste it in empty space by loving the invisible-- [i.e., the perfect man] this is truly to waste it."<sup>1089</sup> In response to Nietzsche's accusation that God is merely an anthropomorphic 'projection', Kierkegaard might point out the suspicious resemblance between exceptional specimens and a certain German philosopher.<sup>1090</sup> Nietzsche might not have evaded his own criticism directed against Romantic pessimism:

It [the will to immortalize] can also be the tyrannic will of one who suffers deeply, who struggles, is tormented, and would like to turn what is most personal, singular, and narrow, the real idiosyncrasy of his suffering, into a binding law and compulsion-- one who, as it were, revenges himself on all things by forcing his own image, the image of his torture on them, branding them with it.<sup>1091</sup>

### c. Self-Referential Incoherence:

Furthermore, if Nietzsche is correct that human beings are unable to comprehend themselves, much less the world around them,<sup>1092</sup> if thinking is truly "a quite arbitrary fiction, arrived at by selecting one element from the process and eliminating all the rest, an artificial arrangement for the purpose of intelligibility",<sup>1093</sup> if there is no semblance of truth but merely constructed realities and competing hermeneutics with varying degrees of usefulness which clash for ideological supremacy,<sup>1094</sup> Kierkegaard would likely repeat

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God himself: "What the Christian says of God, Nietzsche says in very nearly the same words of the Superman, namely: 'Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever and ever.'" [Z 29] In "The Babylonian Captivity of the Church", Luther derided the bishops as "these high and mighty supermen." [Selections 325] The parallels in sentiment are eerie indeed: "The clergy can almost be said also to regard the laity as lower animals, who have been included in the church along with themselves. Thus it arises that they make bold to command and demand, to threaten and urge and oppress, as they please." [Luther Selections 345]

<sup>1089</sup> WL 161.

<sup>1090</sup> See, for example, WP 520 [1888]: "He enjoys the taste of what is wholesome for him [...] [H]e has illnesses as stimulants of his life; he knows how to exploit ill chances [...] [H]e does not submit; he is always in his own company, whether he deals with books, men, or landscapes; he honors by choosing, by admitting, by trusting."

<sup>1091</sup> GS 330.

<sup>1092</sup> WP 263 [1886-1887], 269 [1885-1886].

<sup>1093</sup> WP 264 [1887-1888]. See also WP 315 [1888]: "This is the greatest error that has been committed, the essential fatality of error on earth: one believed one possessed a criterion of reality in the form of reason-- while in fact one possessed them in order to become master of reality, in order to misunderstand reality in a shrewd manner [...]"

<sup>1094</sup> For example, GS 300, WP 330 [1885-1886]: "The world with which we are concerned is false, i.e., is not a fact but a fable and approximation on the basis of a meager sum of observations; it is 'in flux', as something

God's Edenic exclamation: 'Who told you?'<sup>1095</sup> If this is actually the case, how can Nietzsche himself confidently prognosticate the development of "a new habit" which will produce "wise, innocent (conscious of their innocence) men" over the course of millennia?<sup>1096</sup> Despite Nietzsche's assertions, he is loathe to relinquish the optimism that humankind bumbles along an ameliorating if spiritual evolution, an optimism that underscores his own 'priestly' role of offering true-- if 'human'-- sacrifices on the altar of species transcendence.<sup>1097</sup>

If, as Nietzsche maintained, the human will constructs its own volitional fictions out of the ashes of everyday haphazardness-- "All 'It was' is a fragment, a riddle, a dreadful chance-- until the creative will says to it: 'But I willed it thus!'"<sup>1098</sup>-- what prevents his interpretation from being yet another delusional attempt to conjure order from the churning caldron of chaos in which we stew? Why should Nietzsche's assessment of the human situation be privileged above that of Saint Augustine or Don Quixote? The Nietzschean world is thus riddled with the pyrrhic victories of inter-subjectivist politics, where truth and what matters most is unapologetically reduced to metaphysical 'muscle-flexing': "One seeks a picture of the world in that philosophy in which we feel freest; i.e., in which our most powerful drive feels free to function. This will also be the case with me!"<sup>1099</sup>

Moreover, if Christianity is derided for its endorsement of indemonstrable hopes, Kierkegaard would likely ask what confidence Nietzsche possessed in forcefully declaring teleology to be illusion<sup>1100</sup> and life to be an endless cycle of recurrences with neither redemption nor resolution.<sup>1101</sup> To argue that one 'necessary fiction'-- the tenet of *bellum*

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in a state of becoming, as a falsehood always changing but never getting near the truth: for-- there is no 'truth'".

<sup>1095</sup> Genesis 3:11.

<sup>1096</sup> HA 76, 224.

<sup>1097</sup> Nietzsche is thus able to reconcile himself with the contemporary glut of "unwise, unfair men" by regarding them as "*the necessary first stage, but not the opposite of those to come.*" [HA 76]

<sup>1098</sup> Z 163.

<sup>1099</sup> WP 224-225 [1883-1888]. See also HA 253.

<sup>1100</sup> HA 266.

<sup>1101</sup> WP 549 [1888].

*omnium contra omnes*,<sup>1102</sup> for example-- is better than another-- the Christian doctrine of divine love-- is to presuppose that there is an element of truth in the world by which such statements can be measured. Ironically, by making the metaphysical statement that there are no true metaphysical statements,<sup>1103</sup> Nietzsche assumed that he inherently possessed the criteria of truth by which to justify such a grand pronouncement, regardless of how inconsistent such a statement might be. Thus, Kierkegaard would posit that Nietzsche, too, has his truth, an authoritative interpretation of human existence. Far from being a philosophical maverick, Nietzsche was firmly entrenched in a humanistically informed strand of Western philosophy, which presumes that human beings inherently possess the aptitudes, attitudes, and "requisite conditions" for recognizing truth<sup>1104</sup>-- a presupposition Kierkegaard seriously contested in conjunction with the Christian doctrine of human sinfulness.

In one sense, Kierkegaard was far more 'perspectivistic' than Nietzsche in his scepticism of human reason and interpretation.<sup>1105</sup> With no small irony, Kierkegaard observed the preposterous self-myopia of the Cartesian thinking subject who, basing epistemology and self-awareness on doubt, treats everything doubtfully except doubt itself.<sup>1106</sup> In light of the reality of self-deception and distortion, Kierkegaard insisted that relationship with God, the ultimate Subjectivity, is the sole means of escaping the errors and prejudices of rebellious human subjectivity, the only true way to become oneself.<sup>1107</sup> Hence, in response to Nietzsche's famous declaration, "God is dead. God remains dead. And we have killed him",<sup>1108</sup> Kierkegaard would likely respond: "To slay God is the most dreadful suicide; utterly to forget God is a human being's deepest fall [...]"<sup>1109</sup>

<sup>1102</sup> Tanner claims that this concept was "never abandoned, though he often modified his formulations of it." [BG 17]

<sup>1103</sup> Martin Heidegger made this observation. See Parsons 376.

<sup>1104</sup> CA 16. Climacus traced this confidence in self-immanent truth to Socrates. [PF 11-12]

<sup>1105</sup> Hence, he consistently applied the hermeneutic of suspicion to everyone, including himself. [FS 44]

<sup>1106</sup> FS 68. Another point he owed to Pascal. See Pascal 64.

<sup>1107</sup> FS 106, SD 59, CD 40, WL 253, UP I 244.

<sup>1108</sup> GS 181.

<sup>1109</sup> CD 67. Nietzsche himself acknowledged an internal coherence in Christian faith, though he doubted the veracity of its tenets: "If Christianity were right in its tenets of a vengeful god, general sinfulness, predestination, and the danger of an eternal damnation, it would be a sign of stupidity and lack of character *not* to become a priest, apostle, or hermit, and, with fear and trembling, work exclusively on one's own salvation." [HA 86] Obviously, many Christians would not endorse those 'core beliefs' as Nietzsche

From Kierkegaard's perspective, a politically and socially self-centred world is unavoidable when humankind attempts to quantify God, obviating the divine Other within the temporality of immanence. This merely highlights the inevitable need for grace to liberate human beings from the shackles of their own crippling self-reliance, to situate the existential 'escape artist' within the all-encompassing embrace of God, to free her from her own broken attempts at 'freedom'. Such self-knowledge is regrettably foreign to non-Christians prior to the redemptive transformation of their wills and minds: "Do become reasonable, come to your senses, try to become sober" -- thus does the secular mentality taunt the Christian. And the Christian says to the secular mentality, 'Do become reasonable, come to your senses, become sober.'"<sup>1110</sup> Subsequently, Kierkegaard concluded that the proper corrective to widespread doubt is not apologetics but authority:<sup>1111</sup> "Christianity by no means presupposes a direct need and desire for Christianity in the natural man (be he profound or simple) and therefore believes that it must itself command every man to become Christian, for otherwise he never becomes one."<sup>1112</sup>

d. Losing the World:

Kierkegaard would have approved of Nietzsche's emphasis on 'becoming' over 'being', so long as it is restricted to fallible, transient human forms and does not undermine faith in the existence of immutable eternal truths.<sup>1113</sup> With regards to Nietzsche's accusation that Christianity ultimately devalues the natural world, Kierkegaard would claim that God's radical love and freedom, as epitomized in the humanly inconceivable entrance of the eternal into history in the person of Jesus Christ, constitutes the ultimate valuation and preservation of the temporal world. By contrast, Nietzsche's focus on the self as the sole grounds for love and truth tends to reduce the world to a mere 'vanishing

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articulated them.

<sup>1110</sup> FS 96. On the 'disruption' of the egocentered, autonomous self as the condition for receiving truth, see JK 202 [1850], CD 386 [1847], WL 173, WL [revised] 407 [1846], PF 14-15, UD 59.

<sup>1111</sup> WL 11, BA 5. Concurring with one of his main theological influences, he wrote: "Pascal says: The reason it is so difficult to believe is that it is so difficult to obey." [JP III 418 (1840)]

<sup>1112</sup> JP II 587 [1847].

point' in its spiralling egocentric preoccupation for self-actualization and empowerment.<sup>1114</sup> Although he intended to endorse the virtues of courageous action and existential heroism in defiance of a world-without-ends,<sup>1115</sup> Nietzsche's efforts were irreversibly undermined by positing an artificially reconstructed world, where notions of truth and justice are mere secretions upon which humanity slips across the jagged cobblestones of amoral temporality. If Josephus is correct in asserting that the belittling of an adversary withers the laurels of the victor,<sup>1116</sup> Kierkegaard may ask how true heroics can possibly emerge in a world whose existence "is *justified* only as an aesthetic phenomenon"?<sup>1117</sup> Rather than Christians abandoning the world, Kierkegaard would regard Nietzsche's 'aestheticizing' as "an emigration from reality."<sup>1118</sup>

By contrast, Vigilius contested that it takes genuine courage for an individual to face the reality of his inescapable sinfulness in the presence of a holy, all-knowing God.<sup>1119</sup> Kierkegaard would probably accuse Nietzsche of futilely attempting to evade the mercy and justice of God, since he contended that genuine ignorance of God simply does not exist within corrupted Christendom.<sup>1120</sup> He also based this assertion on the providential goodness of God: "Truly, no more than God allows a species of fish to come into existence in a particular lake unless the plant that is its nourishment is also growing there, no more will God allow the truly concerned person to be ignorant of what he is to believe."<sup>1121</sup> Furthermore, Kierkegaard might ask how effective Nietzsche's gambols with the satyr chorus are in light of the brokenness, dejection, and hopelessness in the world. The great Dionysian revel might itself seem a superlative act of denial, a heavily romanticized dodge, a wild assertion "that whatever superficial changes may occur, life is at bottom

<sup>1113</sup> See Climacus' critique of Hegel in UP I 307.

<sup>1114</sup> On the "apparent *objective* character of things" as "a difference of degree within the subjective", see WP 303 [1886-1887]. Climacus traced this anthropocentric focus, which must ineluctably devalue the created order as a means or occasion for human self-awareness and expression, to Socrates: "In the Socratic view, every human being is himself the midpoint, and the whole world focuses only on him because his self-knowledge is God-knowledge." [PF 11]

<sup>1115</sup> GS 219.

<sup>1116</sup> Josephus 21-22.

<sup>1117</sup> BT 8.

<sup>1118</sup> CI 297.

<sup>1119</sup> CA 102.

<sup>1120</sup> JP III 662 [1844].

<sup>1121</sup> CD 244.



indestructibly powerful and joyful".<sup>1122</sup> Mr. A's commentary on Don Giovanni seems uncannily applicable:

When one throws a pebble in such a way that it skims the surface of the water, it can for a time skip over the water in light hops, but it sinks down to the bottom as soon as it stops skipping; in the same way he dances over the abyss, jubilating during his brief span.<sup>1123</sup>

e. Delusion Under Despair:

In a hauntingly foresightful pre-critique of the Nietzschean esprit as "a lust for life based on despair", Kierkegaard commented: "This very remark ['Eat, drink, and be merry...'] echoes with the anxiety about the next day, the day of annihilation, the anxiety that insanely is supposed to signify joy although it is a shriek from the abyss."<sup>1124</sup> Hence, he might rightly ask whether the 'illusion' of will to power can redeem life from its inherent meaninglessness. Nietzsche himself confessed that the 'free spirits', precursors to his doctrine of the *Übermensch*, were 'imaginary' friends intended to comfort him in a time of evident hopelessness in human potential.<sup>1125</sup> He ecstatically envisioned their advent: "I already see them *coming*, slowly, slowly; and perhaps I am doing something to hasten their coming when I describe before the fact the fateful conditions that I see giving rise to them, the paths on which I *see* them coming."<sup>1126</sup> For Kierkegaard, however, the attempt either to grasp the finite infinitely or to measure the eternal against the temporal begins and ends in despair.

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<sup>1122</sup> BT 39.

<sup>1123</sup> EO I 129-130.

<sup>1124</sup> CD 77. See also SD 126-127.

<sup>1125</sup> HA 5. See also HA 4: "[W]hen I could not find what I *needed*, I had to gain it by force artificially, to counterfeit it, or create it poetically." For the *Übermensch* as a manifestation of Zarathustra's will to power, see Z 164.

## II. Anthropological Objections: The Accusation of Enslavement:

### A. Nietzsche:

#### 1. Christianity as Slavery to Mediocrity:

With regards to their understandings of humankind, the main accusation which Nietzsche would level against Christianity in general and Kierkegaard in particular is that of forcibly confining the human race to the 'backwaters' of slave morality and, consequently, intellectual and cultural mediocrity. Although Nietzsche once conceded that Christianity had been distorted by being coerced "to propel the mills of state power",<sup>1127</sup> he generally equated it with hypocrisy, narrowness, and untruth.<sup>1128</sup> Christianity achieves its nefarious aim, according to Nietzsche, by undermining the noble values of the ruling classes through revaluation, "the most intelligent revenge",<sup>1129</sup> as well as by poisoning human vitality and instinct through engendering "a certain false psychology, a certain kind of fantasy in interpreting motives and experiences".<sup>1130</sup> It then prescribes its own fallacious 'anti-venom':

All psychological inventions of Christianity work toward this sick excess of feeling, toward the deep corruption of head and heart necessary for it. Christianity wants to destroy, shatter, shun, intoxicate: there is only one thing it does not want: *moderation*, and for this reason, it is in its deepest meaning barbaric, Asiatic, ignoble, un-Greek.<sup>1131</sup>

Such slavish *r  s  ntiment* is reflected in the gospels' repeated attack upon the "privileged class" of Pharisees and scribes.<sup>1132</sup> According to Nietzsche, the ultimate hermeneutical revaluation for Christians remains the rendering of Christ's ignominious death on the cross into "one more sign of how one ought to behave in relation to the authorities and laws of this world: *not to defend oneself*".<sup>1133</sup> Subsequently, Christianity entails a most

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<sup>1126</sup> HA 5-6.

<sup>1127</sup> HA 166.

<sup>1128</sup> HA 144, GM 27.

<sup>1129</sup> GM 19. See also BG 75.

<sup>1130</sup> HA 94.

<sup>1131</sup> HA 85.

<sup>1132</sup> TI 174.

<sup>1133</sup> WP 103 [1887-1888].

abominable ratification of the status quo, an acquiescence to mediocrity that is moral aesthetic, and cognitive in scope.

## 2. Christianity as 'Unnatural':

According to Nietzsche, this infusion of weakness and infirmity at the heart of Christian faith is an inevitable reflection of the sickly physiologies of Christianity's promulgators.<sup>1134</sup> Moreover, faith itself is a direct embodiment of weakness, "needed most urgently where will is lacking".<sup>1135</sup> Due to Nietzsche's strong conviction that, "the unfree human being is a blemish upon nature and has no share in any heavenly or earthly comfort",<sup>1136</sup> he denounced Christianity as an 'unnatural' blight upon the unfolding telos of nature-- the production of larger units of power-- with their moral pettiness and preservation of inferiority. In addition to restraining the creative energies of the masters, the slaves began tyrannizing themselves with their self-flagellating ethics-- "the morality of unselfing"<sup>1137</sup>-- and world-annihilating renouncement. Hence, Nietzsche charged: "The whole morality of the Sermon on the Mount belongs here; man takes a voluptuous pleasure in violating himself by exaggerated demands and then deifying this something in his soul that is so tyrannically taxing."<sup>1138</sup> The main motivation behind such 'volitional mutilation' is not love, but rather "the dangerous thrills of cruelty directed *against himself*."<sup>1139</sup> He contended that it was far 'easier' to suppress the self than "to assert one's personality without vacillation or confusion".<sup>1140</sup> On account of this craven duplicity, Christianity becomes a haven for mediocrity at both the general and individual level of existence, enslaving all in its wake.

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<sup>1134</sup> GS 34.

<sup>1135</sup> GS 289.

<sup>1136</sup> GS 156.

<sup>1137</sup> EH 67.

<sup>1138</sup> HA 95.

<sup>1139</sup> BG 159-160.

## B. Kierkegaard:

### 1. Affinity:

Kierkegaard wouldn't deny Nietzsche's accusation that Christianity seeks to reduce humankind to subservience to the laws and ordinances of an omnipotent God. In fact, he would insist that Nietzsche had underestimated the radical nature of God's claims upon humankind, "man's serfdom in respect to God, to whom every man not by birth, but by creation from nothing, belongs as a bondservant, and in such a way as no bondservant has ever belonged to an earthly master".<sup>1141</sup> Furthermore, like Nietzsche, Kierkegaard was a fierce opponent of mediocrity, regarding it as "far more dangerous than heresies or schisms, where there nevertheless is passion."<sup>1142</sup> However, unlike Nietzsche, Kierkegaard identified mediocrity with the corrupted compromises of Christendom, which had sullied the heterogeneous excellence of Christianity. Hence, he utterly repudiated "official Christianity, calculated to serve human indolence, mediocrity, by leading people to think that indolence and mediocrity and pleasure are-- Christianity."<sup>1143</sup> In contrast to Nietzsche's attack on the 'Christian masses', Kierkegaard denigrated the 'crowd' itself as "the most ungodly of all unchristian categories."<sup>1144</sup> Against Marx, Kierkegaard averred that it is the masses which are the 'opium' of the people-- not Christianity.<sup>1145</sup>

### 2. Rebuttal:

#### a. Anthropological Wastage:

The Danish theologian would probably have called attention to several crucial inconsistencies which characterize Nietzsche's anthropology. For all of his unbridled enthusiasm for life and love of the world, Nietzsche was highly selective in his displays of

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<sup>1140</sup> HA 97.

<sup>1141</sup> WL 119.

<sup>1142</sup> JP IV 177 [1854]. See also JP III 179 [1855], TM 460 [1854], TA 39.

<sup>1143</sup> TM 200. See also FS 188, SD 124.

<sup>1144</sup> JP III 308 [1847-1848]. See also JP IV 219 [1853], JP IV 167 [1850], PV 109, WA 229 [October 1848], UP I 67.

affection. While showering praise upon the ahistorical *Übermensch*, Nietzsche discounted the vast majority of humankind as "a feeble and worm-eaten fruit!"<sup>1146</sup> Hence, his theory of spiritual evolution, entailing the production of a few exceptional specimens amidst a multitude of waste, requires the 'squandering' of billions of individuals, something Nietzsche attributed to nature's "inexperience".<sup>1147</sup> As Kierkegaard once observed, "[T]here are probably thousands times thousands of people to one genius etc.-- always this enormous waste."<sup>1148</sup> Hence, Judge William anticipated the Nietzschean project in deriding

an esthetic snobbery that thinks that accomplishing something in the world falls to the lot of a chosen few, that there are a few very talented individuals who accomplish something, that the rest of the people are *numerous* [ciphers], superfluities in life, extravagances of the creator.<sup>1149</sup>

b. Loss of Individuality:

Ironically, in his fervour to undermine the free agency and subsequent moral accountability of human beings,<sup>1150</sup> Nietzsche was unperturbed by the ensuing loss of individuality. This is particularly evident in his early writings, where the effacement of the self approximates Hegelian proportions.<sup>1151</sup> By contrast, Kierkegaard's understanding of the will-transforming relationship between the individual and God presupposes a divine freedom of expression which lovingly respects the individual's choice to 'curse God' or embrace him.<sup>1152</sup> Although Nietzsche's *Übermensch* appears to be his highest homage to individuality, Kierkegaard contended that any formulation which appeals to the evolutionary amelioration of the species is a reversion to "the old paganism" which

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<sup>1145</sup> JP III 338 [1854].

<sup>1146</sup> HA 144.

<sup>1147</sup> HA 177.

<sup>1148</sup> TM 180.

<sup>1149</sup> EO II 294-295.

<sup>1150</sup> Interestingly, Nietzsche once attributed this 'freedom from sin' to Christ, which "everyone can now attain through science." [HA 102]

<sup>1151</sup> In BT 18, he referred to "mystical self-negation" and "an ecstatic reality, which [...] seeks to destroy individuality and redeem it with a mystical sense of unity." See also BT 52. Individuality is also threatened both by his disintegration of the acting, thinking self, as well as the attribution of singular acts or thoughts to general, species-wide instincts and drives. [UM 131]

<sup>1152</sup> PV 81.



privileged race over individual, reducing individuals to mere "specimens".<sup>1153</sup>

c. Slavish Sentiments:

Kierkegaard might expand his previous point by highlighting the strange ambivalence which the 'all-loving' philosopher exhibited towards most of the human race. Nietzsche once confessed: "*Disgust* at mankind, at the 'rabble', has always been my greatest danger..."<sup>1154</sup> For all of his emulation of the gentry, Nietzsche displayed a decidedly unaristocratic attitude towards the masses: given their superabundance of power and ego, the masters would hardly have responded with hatred or irritation, but rather indifference towards those 'nonentities' which pose neither threat nor consequence to their position. This is splendidly portrayed in François Mauriac's *The Knot of Vipers*, when Louis, the rich lawyer, explains: "I never talk to servants. It is not that I am a difficult or unreasonable master, but simply that, for me, they don't exist. I don't see them."<sup>1155</sup> By regarding 'slaves' as a threat-- and merely by regarding them at all-- Nietzsche exposed his own decidedly bourgeois bias, an attitude which sometimes elided into the *résentiment* which he attributed to slaves:

Entirely hateful and loathsome to it is he who will never defend himself, who swallows down poisonous spittle and evil looks, the too-patient man who puts up with everything, is content with everything: for that is the nature of slaves. Whether one be servile before gods and divine kicks, or before men and the silly opinions of men, it spits at slaves of *all* kinds, this glorious selfishness.<sup>1156</sup>

Moreover, by engaging in his own moral revaluation,<sup>1157</sup> exposing the vices of slave morality and the virtues of master morality, the German philosopher was ironically engaging in the hermeneutical tactics of the slaves themselves. Nietzsche's insistence upon moderation would have further distanced him from the superabundant excesses that

<sup>1153</sup> PV 107. Ironically, Feuerbach would contend that Kierkegaard's individual-focused model better preserves finitude than Nietzsche's macrocosmic focus on the species; for, "Finiteness-- in the metaphysical sense-- rests, on the distinction of the existence from the essence, of the individual from the species; infinitude, on the unity of existence and essence." [Feuerbach 42]

<sup>1154</sup> EH 19.

<sup>1155</sup> Mauriac 183.

<sup>1156</sup> Z 209. Judge William criticized the move to aggrandize evil as an attempt "to have a little distinction from the common herd". [EO II 226]

<sup>1157</sup> For example, Nietzsche's 'redemption' of redemption, [EH 80] or Zarathustra's blessing upon sensual pleasure, lust for power, and selfishness. [Z 206]

allegedly comprise the spirit of aristocracy.<sup>1158</sup> Hence, Kierkegaard might observe that, for a proponent of upper-class culture and mores, Nietzsche fights like a slave.<sup>1159</sup>

d. Limited Explanatory Capacity:

Another inconsistency for which Kierkegaard may have taken Nietzsche to task pertains to his definitions of human victory and mastery. Despite Nietzsche's personal preferences, the so-called slave classes managed to overcome their 'vastly superior' masters and institute a cultural revolution whose impact has lasted for millennia. As Nietzsche acknowledged: "Never and nowhere has there hitherto been a comparable boldness in inversion, anything so fearsome, questioning and questionable, as this formula: it promised a revaluation of antique values."<sup>1160</sup> Nietzsche attributed this surprising occurrence to both superior intellect and superior numbers of the slaves.<sup>1161</sup> He also blamed the masters' own cruelty and ineptitude for helping to incite the slaves' uprising by inculcating the "*instinct of freedom*" by the very 'hammer-blows' of their 'artistic' violence.<sup>1162</sup> Furthermore, traitorous, disgruntled members of the aristocracy led the insurgence by forging a priestly caste against their own kind.<sup>1163</sup> For this reason, he blasted Darwin's 'erroneous' assumption that species "grow more perfect", lamenting that nature is full of instances where the weak survive to the detriment of the strong.<sup>1164</sup>

Kierkegaard might respond by questioning the ability of Nietzsche's perspective to explain adequately the unfolding of history. Undoubtedly, he would have discovered no small irony that "the victory of Christianity over Greek philosophy" represented the 'brutal injustice' that, "something more crude and violent has triumphed over something more spiritual and delicate."<sup>1165</sup> The Christian life view can account for such 'evil tidings' via its

<sup>1158</sup> HA 85, TI 53. For moderation as a chief tactic for 'blending in with the crowd', see SD 63-64.

<sup>1159</sup> Kierkegaard would regard all human formulations as necessarily slavish attempts to subvert true 'Master morality', since every individual "belongs to God in every thought, the most hidden, in every feeling, the most private, in every moment, the most inward." [WL 119]

<sup>1160</sup> BG 75.

<sup>1161</sup> TI 87.

<sup>1162</sup> GM 67. See also EH 84.

<sup>1163</sup> GM 17.

<sup>1164</sup> TI 87.

<sup>1165</sup> HA 57.

account of sinful, rebellious humankind, but how can the 'naturalist' account for such a glaring imbalance of 'evil' over 'good'-- whether by Nietzsche's definitions or Christianity's-- in a truly amoral and unteleological universe? Shouldn't the odds have suggested an equal occurrence of both randomly appearing? Furthermore, given all of their heightened biological, spiritual, and cultural advantages, how can the masters appear so weak and in dire need of a moral and philosophical protector?<sup>1166</sup> It is the strong who have become the 'endangered species', who appear ludicrously vulnerable as they suckle from the Nietzschean 'wet nurse', who has supplanted the Socratic 'midwife':

My man's fare, my succulent and strengthening discourse, is effective: and truly I did not feed them with distending vegetables! But with warrior's food, with conqueror's food: I awakened new desires. There are new hopes in their arms and legs, their hearts are stretching themselves. They are discovering new worlds, soon their spirits will breathe wantonness.<sup>1167</sup>

Subsequently, Kierkegaard would seriously question the heuristic efficacy of Nietzsche's formulations: if the bonds of biology and culture are so strong, how could a generation of inferior lower classes, presumably impoverished physically, intellectually, and spiritually, and having docility inculcated in them for millennia, possibly rise *en masse* and invoke such a profoundly significant and long-lasting revolution against an aristocratic class who possessed such genetic and cultural advantages carefully crafted across the centuries? How could the church have arisen from the battered remnants of scattered and disillusioned disciples who had just witnessed their master ignominiously undergo an agonizing death? The suggestion that they did so by perpetrating a system of untruth and psychological forgery which has persevered undetected for nearly two thousand years seems at least as incredulous as the suggestion that God willed it so. Hence, Nietzsche's view provides him with no conclusive capability to account for the spectacular rise and continued 'success' of the 'slaves' in light of seemingly overwhelming historical disadvantages. If he were to cite the slaves' victory as an aspect of the uncontrollable nature of the design-less cosmos, Kierkegaard would then question the basis for Nietzsche's confidence that his own philosophical project can instigate such 'seismologically' significant shifts despite the 'fickleness' of fate.

<sup>1166</sup> See, for example, GS 131, WP 363 [1888].

<sup>1167</sup> Z 320.

e. The Need for Epistemological Stability:

Despite the 'radical' challenge which Nietzsche's morality of mastery poses to Christianity, Kierkegaard might contend that his perspective embodies an antiquated, pagan conservatism which presupposes a sociological immobility within classes. As Zarathustra exhorted, "Do not will beyond your powers: there is an evil falsity about those who will beyond their powers."<sup>1168</sup> Moreover, Nietzsche's endorsement of a universe where man is free to alter his destiny to some degree situates Nietzsche firmly within the Western philosophical tradition. His presuppositions immediately call to mind the moral autonomy of Kant and Hobbes, as well as Hegel's and Hume's optimism in humankind progressing 'beyond faith'.<sup>1169</sup> Even his argument for privileging the strong based on observances in nature was voiced by Plato's Callicles.<sup>1170</sup>

Kierkegaard would likely maintain that Nietzsche's optimism in human autonomy and its ability to bind itself to self-legislated laws is hopelessly unfounded. Such expectations, he contended, would not be "rigorously earnest any more than Sancho Panza's self-administered blows to his own bottom were vigorous."<sup>1171</sup> By contrast, Kierkegaard asserted that it is only through the objective, immutable standards levied by an impartial and transcendent God-- who is beyond bribe or manipulation-- and divine empowerment to attain these standards, that human beings are able to become truly free from self-servitude, arbitrariness, and relativism. From Kierkegaard's perspective, freedom for a small elite of specimens does not constitute genuine freedom, but rather slavery for all. Human freedom and the intrinsic worth of every individual is irreversibly rooted in the non-negotiable standard of measurement-- God's holiness-- and the universal opportunity for everyone to be enabled to meet its requirements in Christ through God's love, if only each person is willing. The distorted desire to sever the self from relationship with the power in which it is established is, for Anti-Climacus, indicative of profound

<sup>1168</sup> Z 300.

<sup>1169</sup> See also Ansell-Pearson 41: "Nietzsche's political theory makes the classic move of resting a theory of the political on a theory of nature [...]"

<sup>1170</sup> CI 529 n. 495. See Zeitlin 100-112.

<sup>1171</sup> JP I 76 [1850]. Here, he was responding specifically to Kant's autonomous moral agency. Bonhoeffer concurs: "But self-negation is also a way of self-affirmation. In so far as the logos limits itself it also

despair.<sup>1172</sup> Without such eternal foundations, human beings succumb to "mediocrity's fancied peace of mind": "to become distinguished-- precisely because the yardstick has been converted to our size."<sup>1173</sup> Hence, rather than avoiding mediocrity, by dispelling transcendence and its incontrovertible standard, Nietzsche had unwittingly launched humankind on a flight deeper into mediocrity and, ultimately, slavery. Having explored the critique of Nietzsche's cosmology and anthropology from Kierkegaard's point of view, the following chapter will concentrate specifically upon the topic of power and authority.

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establishes itself with power." [29]

<sup>1172</sup> SD 99.

<sup>1173</sup> FS 199. See also FS 96, WL 127.



## Chapter 7: Power in Principle: Comparing the Masters:

### III. The Tier of Authority: The Accusation of Power Mongering:

#### A. Nietzsche:

##### 1. Church as Power Tool:

Nietzsche contended that all human and biological life on the planet is directed towards a single purpose: the accumulation of power and its reconfiguration into larger units.<sup>1174</sup> According to Nietzsche, it was Schopenhauer's legacy to have prepared the way for the nineteenth century to transcend a "valueless existence" through participation in "an exalted and transfiguring overall goal: to acquire power so as to aid the evolution of the *physis* and to be for a while the corrector of its follies and ineptitudes."<sup>1175</sup> Subsequently, the human race advances only to the extent that dangerously knowledgeable individuals-- the 'master free spirits'-- defy societal limitations and establish an 'experimental' precedent which radically shifts the horizons of the species and ushers in the arrival of the "superspecies".<sup>1176</sup> Ensuing periods of cultural conventionality are valuable for constraining mutually hostile forces and providing sociological stability so that power bases can be consolidated under relatively peaceful conditions.<sup>1177</sup> Since Nietzsche's understanding of society mirrored his conception of the self as a conglomeration of conflicting drives which vie for supremacy within the psyche,<sup>1178</sup> every individual's aspirations reflect those of all organic life: to maximize personal pleasure and minimize personal pain and/ or inflict pain,<sup>1179</sup> through the accumulation of power.<sup>1180</sup>

As a product of human culture, the Christian church played an eminent role in

<sup>1174</sup> BG 44, 194; GS 175-176, 291-292; GM 56-57.

<sup>1175</sup> UM 142.

<sup>1176</sup> Z 100. See also HA 7-8.

<sup>1177</sup> HA 168, UM 150, WP 340 [1888].

<sup>1178</sup> BG 37, 49; WP 267 [1883-1888]. However, he attributed such internal discord to "an era of dissolution which mixes the races together". [BG 121]

<sup>1179</sup> HA 50.

<sup>1180</sup> HA 25.

power consolidation, according to Nietzsche, though its role has now been assumed by the modern state.<sup>1181</sup> Spurning the example set by Christ, the church had merely utilized his teachings and brutal execution as a foundation for a new system of religious tyranny.<sup>1182</sup> Nietzsche was keen to point out the ludicrous hypocrisy evident within a church that “wages war, condemns, tortures, swears, hates,” embodies nationalist prejudices, and still professes to follow Christ.<sup>1183</sup> Hence, he savagely purred:

What? A god who loves men, provided only that they believe in him, and who casts an evil eye and threats upon anyone who does not believe in this love? What? A love encapsulated in if-clauses attributed to an almighty god? A love that has not even mastered the feelings of honor and vindictiveness? How Oriental this is! ‘If I love you, is that your concern?’ is a sufficient critique of the whole of Christianity.<sup>1184</sup>

However, Nietzsche expressed some admiration for the church’s ability to dominate without recourse to ‘brute’ force:

A church is above all a structure for ruling that serves the highest rank for the *more spiritual* human beings and that *believes* in the power of spirituality to the extent of forbidding itself the use of all the cruder instruments of force; and on this score alone the church is under all circumstances a *nobler* institute than the state.<sup>1185</sup>

The church’s depiction of God and its endorsement of secular authority as divinely sanctioned has immense repercussions for the polity of the state, hence its importance to the Machiavellian monarch. Nietzsche observed: “Men often deal with their princes in a similar way as with their God, since after all the Prince was often God’s representative, or at least his high priest.”<sup>1186</sup> To Nietzsche’s dismay, however, he recognized that there have always been certain pernicious elements within the church which oppose the glorious ideals of the master ‘free spirit’ and seek to limit the power of the nobility, thus creating an

<sup>1181</sup> UM 150.

<sup>1182</sup> WP 116 [1887-1888]. See also WP 97-98 [1888]: “What did Christ *deny*? Everything that is today called Christian”. The fact that similar criticism is levelled by Tolstoy against the Russian Orthodox church suggests the prevalence of this protest across Europe: “And to not one of those present, from the priest and the superintendent [...] did it occur that this Jesus Whose name the priest repeated in wheezy tones such an endless number of times, praising Him with outlandish words, had expressly forbidden everything that was being done there [...]” [184]

<sup>1183</sup> WP 100 [1887-1888].

<sup>1184</sup> GS 190. Nietzsche owed this last point to Goethe’s *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre*, where Philine says to Wilhelm, “If I love you, what does that matter to you?” [TC 283 n. 32]

<sup>1185</sup> GS 313.

'unnatural' obstruction in the cosmos-wide process of power expansion.<sup>1187</sup> Within Kierkegaard's own formulations, Nietzsche probably would have observed a telling inconsistency. If God's power is so heterogeneous and independent of 'sensate authority', why do populist incursions on the Danish monarchy effect an erosion of divine power? And in light of such incursions, was not Kierkegaard cunningly indebting God to his polemical services in acting as "an insignificant official who by any means, by slyness, by force (that is, spiritual force) must confiscate all illusions and seize those arrogant delusions based on effrontery toward God"?<sup>1188</sup> Nietzsche would find this reliance upon 'force'-- 'spiritual' though it may be-- conclusive evidence that the Christian's true assurance is still a ruse by any other name.

## 2. The Myth of Christian 'Selflessness':

Despite the church's doctrinal protestations to the contrary, Nietzsche contended that every ecclesiastical activity, from the imposition of moral judgments,<sup>1189</sup> to the praise of worthy examples,<sup>1190</sup> from the dissemination of teachings,<sup>1191</sup> to the dispensation of 'mercies',<sup>1192</sup> is a demonstration of power. Nietzsche considered its ethic of 'selflessness' to be a ludicrous illusion for several reasons. First, even the best-intentioned philanthropist "has to do a *great deal* for himself in order to be able to do anything at all for the sake of others."<sup>1193</sup> Second, the Christian's 'selfless' existence is ironically predicated by "the continued existence of loveless egoists incapable of self-sacrifice", who supply the necessary objects of such 'selfless' munificence.<sup>1194</sup> Nietzsche argued that Christian virtue irrefragably thrives upon its dialectical relations with unchristian atrocities; consequently, "[T]he highest morality, in order to endure, would have virtually to *exact* the existence of

<sup>1186</sup> HA 220.

<sup>1187</sup> GM 22, 57. This is one reason for his denigration of the Judaeo-Christian era whereby he claimed, "[E]verything *essential* in human development occurred in primeval times, long before those four thousand years with which we are more or less familiar." [HA 14]

<sup>1188</sup> CD 385 [November 20, 1847].

<sup>1189</sup> HA 62, Z 136.

<sup>1190</sup> HA 123.

<sup>1191</sup> HA 154.

<sup>1192</sup> HA 184; GS 86, 88.

<sup>1193</sup> HA 92.

<sup>1194</sup> HA 92.

immorality (by which, to be sure, it would cancel itself out)."<sup>1195</sup> Finally, to the degree that such selflessness is a manifestation of "the ascetic ideal", it is part of one of the most refined and totalitarian 'wills to power' known to humankind.<sup>1196</sup> Nietzsche, thus, concluded: "Never has a man done anything that was only for others and without any personal motivation."<sup>1197</sup>

### 3. Kierkegaard's Quest for Power:

Nietzsche would probably cite several of Kierkegaard's own statements on Christian authority and polemical joustings with the state church, the media,<sup>1198</sup> rival philosophical and ethical systems,<sup>1199</sup> and "the two great powers in society, envy and obtuseness"<sup>1200</sup> in order to substantiate his argument for the church's primary preoccupation with power.<sup>1201</sup> Kierkegaard once confessed his love of intellectual pugilism: "By nature I am so polemical that I really feel in my element only when surrounded by human mediocrity and scurviness."<sup>1202</sup> He justified his stance on the basis that, "[a]lthough I am so thoroughly polemical and was so even in my youth, still Christianity is almost too polemical for me."<sup>1203</sup> Bishop Mynster once accused Kierkegaard of 'wanting to tyrannize' after he urged the ecclesiastical leaders to rule more vigorously.<sup>1204</sup> Kierkegaard even instructed his own king on how to rule with authority and "fight with 'the masses'".<sup>1205</sup> Furthermore, according to Nietzsche, Kierkegaard is

<sup>1195</sup> HA 92.

<sup>1196</sup> GM 123-124. This accounts for some of Nietzsche's ambivalence towards the church: insofar as it was the inculcator and repository of the ascetic ideal, he admired the 'rigorous' Christianity of earlier centuries. [TI 190] On how its "subterranean conspiracy" rejuvenated "the politically weary and the indifferent", see WP 95 [1887-1888].

<sup>1197</sup> HA 92. He cited Georg Lichtenberg and François La Rochefoucauld in support of this contention. In contrast to selflessness, Nietzsche advocated an overwhelming sense of 'selffulness' -- "great love" for self and world-- in order to resolve the "great problems" of existence. [GS 283]

<sup>1198</sup> TC 174 [1846].

<sup>1199</sup> For example, JK 146 [1848], SW 230, PF xiii, CI 25.

<sup>1200</sup> TM 92.

<sup>1201</sup> For key references to Christian 'battles', self-conquering, and authority, see TM 143, 332; JP I 78 [1854]; FS 61, 129; JP III 243 [1851]; JP IV 186 [1851]; PC 76, 229, 361 [1850]; WA 157; PV 123, 179 [1849], 203 [1849]; JK 173 [1849]; CD 321; BA 232 [October 1848]; UV 258; JP IV 462 [1847]; FT 16; UD 281; CI 319.

<sup>1202</sup> TM 92. His feistiness was marked from an early age, as reflected by the parting advice of his friend and mentor Poul Møller: "You are so thoroughly polemical that it is quite appalling." [TM 458 (1854)]

<sup>1203</sup> TM 459 [1854].

<sup>1204</sup> PC 364 [1851].

<sup>1205</sup> JK 155 [1849].

guilty of committing 'theoretical violence' by constraining the amoral universe within artificial structures, thus exercising his own "will to power".<sup>1206</sup> His learned attempts to assist the reader, however indirectly, towards a closer relationship to God are merely subtle attempts at self-empowerment by gaining mastery over his readership. This is reflected in the duplicitous origins of indirect communication-- Kierkegaard's wilful deception of a naive Regine Olsen to evade an undesirable union, who "could be helped only by an untruth about me."<sup>1207</sup>

Nietzsche would not have accepted Kierkegaard's 'Socratic' disclaimer that he possessed no authority of his own but wrote with the intention of merely seeking personal edification.<sup>1208</sup> Declarations of intellectual 'bankruptcy' would not have dissuaded the Nietzschean power 'creditor' from exhuming the hidden 'vaults' of authority by which Kierkegaard sought to bankroll a resurgence against the political and religious leadership of his day. Undoubtedly, Nietzsche would have been impressed by Kierkegaard's intellectual prowess, his solitude and strength of character, his abhorrence for the mediocrity of the masses, and his attempt to 'make life difficult' for them.<sup>1209</sup> However, Kierkegaard's ongoing struggles with despair-- the contamination of 'bad conscience' in Nietzsche's view-- and his ultimate confinement within the detrimental restraints of Christianity would have convinced Nietzsche that he, like Pascal, was yet another 'noble' casualty of the pernicious slave morality of Christianity: "I do not read Pascal but *love* him, as the most instructive of all sacrifices to Christianity, slowly murdered first physically then psychologically, the whole logic of this most horrible form of inhuman cruelty [...]"<sup>1210</sup>

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<sup>1206</sup> Z 136, GM 57-58.

<sup>1207</sup> PV 249 [1850]. See also CD 386 [November 20, 1847], WL 398, BA 279 [1846-1847], UP I 625; TC 195, 211, 227 [1848], 239 [1849]; SW xii.

<sup>1208</sup> UD x.

<sup>1209</sup> UP I 186-187, JK 93 [1845], FT 121.

<sup>1210</sup> EH 27.



## B. Kierkegaard:

### 1. Affinity:

Unlike thousands of his contemporaries who masked their rebellion against God beneath the niceties and external conventions of religiosity, Kierkegaard would have lauded Nietzsche for openly expressing his rebellion against divine authority. Nietzsche's suspicion of Christianity's animosity towards (sinful) human autonomy was not without grounds,<sup>1211</sup> as Kierkegaard articulated God's desire to put the sinful, dissolute life 'to death' in order to imbue the individual with true and everlasting life. On account of his pre-redemption state, Nietzsche exhibited a 'natural' aversion to what was truly good while reevaluating the 'bad' as good to both justify and assert his personal sensate authority.<sup>1212</sup> As a member of the fallen human race, Kierkegaard would claim that Nietzsche unavoidably participated in a tragic bid for freedom which severs humankind from the very source of its life. The primary assault consists of quantifying God and reducing his transcendental power to temporal terms, allowing both Christians and non-Christians to co-opt divine power for sensate gains and objectives, to compromise divine power irreversibly by marshalling sensate power in its 'defence', or to dismiss it as antiquated superstition deemed irrelevant to the lives of 'modern' man.<sup>1213</sup> God is thereby anthropomorphized into a large-scale 'human', whose authority may be challenged, circumvented, appropriated, or altogether ignored.<sup>1214</sup> The apex of this universal revolt against God occurred when representatives from every rank and file of society elected to execute Jesus Christ.<sup>1215</sup> Within this theological framework, Nietzsche's animosity towards Christianity's heterogeneous standards and resolute expectations of human conduct ironically supported its transcendental claims.

<sup>1211</sup> On Christ's threat to power, see TI 156.

<sup>1212</sup> JP III 419 [1850], I 77 [1854].

<sup>1213</sup> For this reason, H. H. concluded: "*In the sphere of immanence, authority is utterly unthinkable, or it can be thought only as transitory.*" [WA 99]

<sup>1214</sup> PC 104, CD 384 [November 20, 1847]. Karl Barth contended that human beings can only image the divine as a projection of inflated human power unless "in His own freedom God makes Himself apprehensible." [23]

<sup>1215</sup> WA 59-60.

## 2. Rebuttal:

### a. Despair-Turned-Boredom:

Kierkegaard insisted that divine power as embodied in Christ remains primarily incomprehensible to a non-Christian perspective prior to redemption.<sup>1216</sup> In regarding Nietzsche's writings as expressions of sinful despair, Kierkegaard's initial response may have been to call attention to a certain fundamental ennui which restlessly seeks fulfilment in temporal externalities. The wide-eyed longing that

severity, force, slavery, peril in the street and in the heart, concealment, stoicism, the art of experiment and devilry of every kind, that everything evil, dreadful, tyrannical, beast of prey and serpent in man serves to enhance the species 'man' just as much as does its opposite<sup>1217</sup>

could not possibly have been originated from a witness of the French Revolution or the One-Hundred-Year's War, much less survivors from Auschwitz, Rwanda, or Fallujah. Instead, it suggests boredom, frustration, the feeble mutterings of an 'existential shut-in' sitting at his desk as he gazes out the window through the 'bars' of a deadening bureaucracy, pining for a war or similar adventitious cause to rescue him from the smothering meaninglessness of his life. In a similar vein, I believe that Kierkegaard would have critiqued Nietzsche's Faustian quest for 'dangerous knowledge' as aesthetic despair and over-romanticized idealism. As he commented in one upbuilding discourse, "Who would know how to speak about the delights of riches better than the one who lives on crumbs, who would describe power and might more glowingly than the person who sighs in bondage [...]"<sup>1218</sup> And yet chaos shows no favouritism in the aftermath it wreaks. Wide-scale devastation would likely weaken the very institutes which propagate the aristocrats, who already require the protection of a philosophical overlord to preserve them

<sup>1216</sup> PF 30-31, UD 379. Hence, 'secular' accounts would evaluate Christ on the basis of his historical accomplishments and typically conclude that he had squandered his great potential. [PC 49, UV 91] The observer would ultimately be offended by the mere notion "that God proves to be the lowly, poor, suffering and finally powerless human being." [PC 102]

<sup>1217</sup> BG 72. See also WP 33 [1888].

<sup>1218</sup> UD 93. Cf. Pascal 59: "Who indeed would think himself unhappy not to be king except one who had been dispossessed?" Unamuno derides Nietzsche's philosophy as, "the doctrine of weaklings who aspire to be strong". [65-66]

from the ravaging rabble. Kierkegaard would likely contend that Nietzsche has idealistically and tragically overestimated the possibilities of creation from devastation, reconfigurations from chaos. Moreover, Nietzsche's fundamental principle of agonism in 'nature' appears as a blatant contradiction to his professed opposition to anthropomorphizing the 'natural universe'.<sup>1219</sup>

b. The Idealized Aristocracy:

Another prominent feature of Nietzsche's concept of authority which would invite Kierkegaardian scrutiny is his romanticization of the nobility.<sup>1220</sup> Nietzsche carefully crafted an aristocrat whose magnanimity flowed from his "strong and godlike selfhood",<sup>1221</sup> who indelibly imprinted his particular vision of honour and value with a presumptuous, volitional transcendence from his own historical context. Such a figure towers above a pygmied humankind with apparent demigod status: "The noble type of man feels *himself* to be the determiner of values; he does not need to be approved of, he judges 'what harms me is harmful in itself', he knows himself to be that which in general first accords honour to things, he *creates values*."<sup>1222</sup> This highly vaunted predecessor segues seamlessly into the long-awaited *Übermensch*:

One does not reckon with such beings, they arrive like fate, without motive, reason, consideration, pretext, they arrive like lightning, too fearful, too sudden, too convincing, too 'different', even to be hated. Their work is an instinctive creation and impression of form, they are the most involuntary, most unconscious artists there are-- wherever they appear, something new quickly grows up, a *living* structure of domination [...]<sup>1223</sup>

Kierkegaard would have endeavoured to inject some realism into the reverie. Nietzsche's depictions of the chivalrous 'knightly code' among the nobility appear more frequently in the medieval romances of Marie de France than in the turbulent pages of

<sup>1219</sup> This point is exquisitely made by Britain's foremost philosophical jesters, Monty Python's Flying Circus, Episode #30, who parody a similar tendency in 'nature' programming: while showing a photo of a wolf, a German voice [a poke at Nietzsche?] intones: "Here we see an ant. This ant is engaged in a life-and-death struggle with the wolf [...]" [[http://www.ibras.dk/Monty\\_python/episode30.htm#6](http://www.ibras.dk/Monty_python/episode30.htm#6)]

<sup>1220</sup> For other affinities with Romanticism, see Detwiler 190.

<sup>1221</sup> WP 209 [1887].

<sup>1222</sup> BG 195.

<sup>1223</sup> GM 66-67.

European history.<sup>1224</sup> In *The Genealogy of Morality*, he depicted the nobleman as a paragon of virility, the perfect specimen whose lordship over village and value-system alike stems from a superabundance of health:

The knightly-aristocratic value-judgments presuppose a powerful physicality, a rich, burgeoning, even over-flowing health, as well as those things which help to preserve it-- war, adventure, hunting, dancing, competitive games, and everything which involves strong, free, high-spirited activity.<sup>1225</sup>

Nietzsche's highly selective idealization of the aristocracy as the purveyor of fine human specimens, the repository of "collective self-esteem" which comprises "the great preparatory school for personal sovereignty",<sup>1226</sup> "[t]hose great forcing houses for strong human beings",<sup>1227</sup> conveniently overlooked the more pernicious themes of indulgence, cruelty, excess, treachery, indolence, and early death which befell many a noble. His paeans to these phantasmal figures resonate with thick sentimentality for a 'golden' because idealized past. His pealing prose on unbridled heroism and 'the discovery of values for uninvented scales' possesses provocative parallels with the geriatric grasping of Tennyson's Ulysses, rallying his aging Argonauts for one last hobble into the breach.<sup>1228</sup> By contrast, Kierkegaard's personal acquaintance with Danish monarchs likely tempered any temptations to over-idealize the aristocracy.<sup>1229</sup>

One way Nietzsche might have responded to such criticism was by emphasizing that it is not the aristocrats themselves but their institutions which are the decisive factor in breeding forerunners of the *Übermensch*.<sup>1230</sup> Hence, he regarded material security as

*the source of a nobility of the blood.* Wealth necessarily produces an aristocracy of race, for it permits one to select the most beautiful women and to pay the best

<sup>1224</sup> See, for example, GS 87: "[B]ut they are doubly obliging toward their *peers* whom it would be honourable to fight if the occasion should ever arise. Spurred by the good feeling of *this* perspective, the members of the knightly caste became accustomed to treating each other with exquisite courtesy." For "the charms of rareness, inimitableness, exceptionalness, and unaverageness-- its aristocratic magic", see WP 175 [1887-1888]. Houlgate cogently traces Nietzsche's 'heroic' emphasis to Greek tragedy. [*Hegel* 195] See also Burkitt 62.

<sup>1225</sup> GM 19. This stands in stark contrast to slave morality, which stems from hatred and bitter invective against life. [GM 22]

<sup>1226</sup> WP 406 [1887-1888].

<sup>1227</sup> TI 104.

<sup>1228</sup> See GS 117, 228, 346.

<sup>1229</sup> JK 155 [1849].

<sup>1230</sup> Z 110, WP 463 [1887-1888].

teachers; it allows a person to be clean, to have time for physical exercise, and, above all, to avoid dulling physical labour.<sup>1231</sup>

In less exuberant moments, Nietzsche contended that the greatest specimens share a symbiotic connection with their times:

Great men, like great epochs, are explosive material in whom tremendous energy has been accumulated; their prerequisite has always been, historically and physiologically, that a protracted assembling, accumulating, economizing and preserving has preceded them-- that there has been no explosion for a long time.<sup>1232</sup>

Hence, the 'herd', too, must be protected from excessive damage at the hands of a short-sighted 'exception'.<sup>1233</sup> Moreover, Nietzsche clearly acknowledged the existence of aristocratic 'defects' in a passage where he pondered the concept of mandatory castration "regardless of class" to eliminate societal 'miscarriages'.<sup>1234</sup>

Perhaps Nietzsche himself knew that his genealogical assessments contained some wishful thinking, in attempting to inspire a dispirited age, to press back the Schopenhauerian pessimism and the overwhelming tides of mediocrity which were inundating nineteenth-century Europe. He once wrote:

History shows: the strong races decimate one another: through war, thirst for power, adventurousness; the strong affects: wastefulness [...] [T]heir existence is costly; in brief-- they ruin one another; periods of profound exhaustion and torpor supervene: all great ages are *paid for*-- The strong are subsequently weaker, more devoid of will, more absurd than the weak average.<sup>1235</sup>

As with all imperatives urging a *carpe deum* perspective, Nietzsche's strategy is effective so long as everyone does not strive to 'seize the godhead', to live as conquerors, innovators, and thieves.<sup>1236</sup> Perhaps this is one reason why Nietzsche addressed his books to a small, select audience, "the kind of people who alone matter: I mean those who are *heroic*."<sup>1237</sup>

<sup>1231</sup> UM 231.

<sup>1232</sup> TI 108. See also WP 68 [1885], 215 [1888], 463 [1887-1888].

<sup>1233</sup> GS 131.

<sup>1234</sup> WP 389 [1888].

<sup>1235</sup> WP 462 [1888].

<sup>1236</sup> GS 338.



## c. Enslaved to the Outcome:

Another of Kierkegaard's probable criticisms of Nietzsche's concept of authority strikes at the very heart of his philosophical project. By absolutizing temporal power and human ability to shape hermeneutically the world which they inhabit, the human being enslaves herself to 'fate'.<sup>1238</sup> With the eradication of the transcendent Other, Kierkegaard argued that the individual is imprisoned between an unchangeable past and an uncertain future, confined to the domain of thieves, rot, rust, and the 'slings and arrows of outrageous fortune', which constantly threaten to erode her basis of authority, culminating in avarice, anxiety, and despair.<sup>1239</sup> She becomes, in Climacus' words, "a slave to the outcome".<sup>1240</sup> Ironically, the more a person exchanges the 'uncertainty' of spiritual freedom for the 'certainty' of sensate power, the more she locates her self-worth in uncontrollable externals instead of a restored relationship with God, the more impoverished the self becomes, and the less power she is subsequently capable of wielding without succumbing to that power.<sup>1241</sup> Because the Christian's identity and ultimate worth are rooted in the unshakable love of God, she is 'freed' from external accomplishments, and Kierkegaard contended that not even death can negate or 'cut short' her life's work if she has been living in obedience to God.<sup>1242</sup>

In contrast to Nietzsche's ever-grasping will to power, Kierkegaard concurred with Plato that the best rulers are those who don't desire power, lest the tyrant become enslaved by his own lust for power or enter "a concealed relation of dependency on those whom he is supposed to rule".<sup>1243</sup> Hence, Anti-Climacus stated that the man who relentlessly bases his self-worth upon temporal achievements-- adhering to the Nietzschean 'either/ or', "Caesar or nothing"-- demonstrates true weakness in failing to accept himself regardless of

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<sup>1237</sup> GS 235.

<sup>1238</sup> UP I 137, CA 96-97. Here the classical Hellenistic despair inherent within Nietzsche's neo-pagan framework becomes evident. See also EO I 38.

<sup>1239</sup> JP VI 202 [1855], CD 48, UV 27, SW 466, CA 61, FT 15, UD 10.

<sup>1240</sup> UP I 398.

<sup>1241</sup> WL 252, TA 7.

<sup>1242</sup> UV 142.

<sup>1243</sup> TM 91. Hence, Frater Taciturnus stated that the abuse of power over another person is a sign of weakness, not strength. [SW 473] A tyrant may be enslaved by brute force when, having used it once, he dare not lay it aside lest he relinquish his hold on his subjects. [SW 324]

whether he becomes Caesar or not.<sup>1244</sup> Kierkegaard contended that anything-- such as sensate authority-- which is possessed as a result of 'accidents of fortune' can never be confidently possessed.<sup>1245</sup> Reflecting upon the mighty exploits of Napoleon, Climacus declared:

If Napoleon is as great as the most reckless notion, if his whole life is like a fairy tale, then, just as in a fairy tale, there is in truth still another fanciful figure. It is a shrunk old witch, a shrivelled being, a little creature, a spider on whose one feeler there are some numbers-- they are the outcome. And the superhuman hero of the fairy tale, whom nothing, nothing can withstand, is nevertheless in the power of this little creature [...]<sup>1246</sup>

For this reason, Kierkegaard emphasized that, "[a]ll finite power makes [a being] dependent [...]"<sup>1247</sup>

The lofty and 'indifferent' power which Nietzsche praised, "which is conscious of no witness around it; which lies oblivious of the existence of any opposition; which reposes in *itself* fatalistic, a law among laws",<sup>1248</sup> refers more to architecture than arch-dukes. Such security is poor comfort, according to Kierkegaard, in light of the incontestable power of God. Any temporal authority, which is necessarily dependent upon uncontrollable variables which must be continuously bolstered and maintained,<sup>1249</sup> thereby entails "hard and heavy slavery".<sup>1250</sup> From the perspective of eternity, monarchs and nobility possess no existential distinctions or privileges: they are as equally separated from God and in need of redemption as any other human being.<sup>1251</sup> Subsequently, Kierkegaard maintained that 'sensate' leaders lack any spiritual authority,<sup>1252</sup> though they unconsciously retain their sensate authority "*by the grace of God*".<sup>1253</sup> To the extent that the strong and wealthy protect the poor and promote justice among the nations, they are dutifully fulfilling their posts. As soon as rulers adopt a 'pyramidal' mindset and subjugate their charges,

<sup>1244</sup> SD 49. See also UV 171. On the peril of locating worth 'outside oneself', see BA 23.

<sup>1245</sup> CD 225.

<sup>1246</sup> UP I 398.

<sup>1247</sup> TM 391 [1846]. See also UV 29-30, FT 41, and UD 201: "[A]ll external power is powerless."

<sup>1248</sup> TI 85.

<sup>1249</sup> UD 317.

<sup>1250</sup> UV 181.

<sup>1251</sup> Because God's power is qualitatively heterogeneous, God shows complete impartiality as to whether a king or a beggar becomes a Christian, since none can 'assist God's cause'. [TM 43]

<sup>1252</sup> TM 113, WA 100.

Kierkegaard averred: "So God pushes over the pyramid and everything collapses-- a generation later man begins this pyramid business again."<sup>1254</sup>

d. Blindness to the Limitations of Sensate Authority:

Kierkegaard would probably press his offensive one step further and contend that Nietzsche was blind to the inherent limitations of sensate authority by his own desire for power. Nietzsche's totalizing reduction of human behaviour and action to 'instincts' and unconscious drives entails the promulgation of natural determinism: even the most strident ascetic measures and self-sacrifices are attributed to the innate instincts, which weaker humans are "too degenerate" to rein in by moderation.<sup>1255</sup> Kierkegaard would indubitably challenge Nietzsche on his definition of 'freedom' and ask whether it did not represent a most repressive kind of bondage:

For what is freedom? That one has the will to self-responsibility. That one preserves the distance which divides us. That one has become more indifferent to hardship, toil, privation, even to life. That one is ready to sacrifice men to one's cause, oneself not excepted. Freedom means that the manly instincts that delight in war and victory have gained mastery over the other instincts-- for example, over the instinct for 'happiness.'<sup>1256</sup>

Because human nature is inextricably connected with its sociological context, according to Nietzsche, individuals are thus conditioned by cultural as well as biological determinants.<sup>1257</sup> He is, however, somewhat equivocal as to whether nature or nurture gains predominance. Although his entire philosophical project is founded upon the prospect of altering 'nature' using proper philosophical guidance, Nietzsche remained intensely sceptical of any reformation of 'tainted' biological factors.<sup>1258</sup> Within his doctrine of eternal recurrence, humankind is encircled by a cosmic 'hamster wheel' which perpetually spins without going anywhere-- another curious incongruence for a thinker

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<sup>1253</sup> JP IV 135 [August 8, 1839].

<sup>1254</sup> JP IV 194 [1854].

<sup>1255</sup> TI 53.

<sup>1256</sup> TI 103-104.

<sup>1257</sup> See, for example, TI 102: "[T]he chasm between man and man, class and class, the multiplicity of types, the will to be oneself, to stand out-- that which I call *pathos of distance*-- characterizes every *strong* age."

<sup>1258</sup> EH 18: "[A]ll the *concealed* dirt at the bottom of many a nature, perhaps conditioned by bad blood but whitewashed by education, is known to me almost on first contact."

who endorsed 'becomings'. According to Anti-Climacus, Nietzsche's motto of *amor fati* in a God-less universe would entail a most tragic abrogation of human life and liberty; for, "The determinist, the fatalist, is in despair, and in despair he has lost his self because for him everything is a necessity."<sup>1259</sup> Specifically, Kierkegaard would likely focus upon two primary components of Nietzsche's theological 'blindspots' regarding the shortcomings of sensate power.

i. Grounding the Leaders:

Kierkegaard would first contend that Nietzsche's position is highly unrealistic in its naive optimism concerning human capacities to transcend personal and societal contexts. Though Nietzsche held no utopian illusions as to the benefits of the aristocrats for their contemporaries, the nobility provided long-term 'utilitarian' benefits insofar as they advanced the species towards a spiritual freedom unimpeded by obsolete mores and religiosity. This optimism is paralleled by what Kierkegaard would deem an exaggerated hopefulness in humankind's ability to master its darkest instincts once they have been unleashed.<sup>1260</sup> In response to Nietzsche's unrealistic insistence that the noble leader can liberate himself from all pettiness and excel at 'self-control and self-outwitting',<sup>1261</sup> Kierkegaard would rejoin: "No matter how strong a person is, no person is stronger than himself."<sup>1262</sup> From his point of view, it is an impossible and inane expectation, "as if he were able to perform the marvel unheard of in heaven or on earth or under the earth-- that something that is in conflict with itself can in this conflict be stronger than itself!"<sup>1263</sup>

When Nietzsche asked,

Is a state of affairs unthinkable in which the malefactor calls himself to account and publicly dictates his own punishment, in the proud feeling that he is thus honouring the law which he himself has made, that by punishing himself he is

<sup>1259</sup> SD 70.

<sup>1260</sup> See, for example, WP 503 [1885] and WP 207 [1885-1886]: "But putting them [the affects] into service [...] may also mean subjecting them to a protracted tyranny (not only as an individual, but as a community, race, etc.). At last they are confidently granted freedom again: they love us as good servants and go voluntarily wherever our best interests lie."

<sup>1261</sup> BG 122.

<sup>1262</sup> UD 18.

<sup>1263</sup> UD 128.

exercising his power, the power of the law-giver?<sup>1264</sup>

Kierkegaard would have undoubtedly answered with a stentorian affirmative. Because, by Nietzsche's own admission, the "born aristocrats of the spirit" have nothing to prove-- "The wish to create incessantly is vulgar, betraying jealousy, envy, and ambition [...]"<sup>1265</sup> -- Kierkegaard might validly ask by what motive they would instigate such pivotal and widespread spiritual revolutions. What moves the 'unmover'? On one level, Nietzsche's assertion appears to echo Climacus' contention that the true ethical hero is oblivious to external pressures and accomplishments: "[I]n the process he perhaps would produce a great effect in the external world, but this would not occupy him at all, because he would know that the external is not in his power and therefore means nothing either *pro* or *contra*."<sup>1266</sup> However, according to Kierkegaard, the Christian is freed from basing her identity upon the uncontrollable throes of temporality precisely because her self-worth and being are founded entirely upon God. Hence, he declared that only "inauthentic extraordinaries" depend upon external results to prove their merit,<sup>1267</sup> and Climacus mocked "the independence that, independent of the world, needs the world as witness to one's independence so as to be certain of being independent."<sup>1268</sup> Kierkegaard would likely have attributed Nietzsche's inconsistencies as characteristic of one who is blind to despair and firmly mired in the aesthetic fallacy, who thus overvalues temporal externalities to the detriment of eternal internalities.

## ii. Questioning the Breeder:

The second component of Kierkegaard's accusation that Nietzsche was blind to the limits of temporal power consists of Nietzsche's ambitious presumption that one man can deliberately mould the entire species and speed the arrival of a 'higher' race of bipedal behemoths.<sup>1269</sup> Nietzsche explained: "Breeding, as I understand it, is a means of storing up

<sup>1264</sup> NR 234.

<sup>1265</sup> HA 126.

<sup>1266</sup> UP I 135-136.

<sup>1267</sup> BA 157.

<sup>1268</sup> UP I 76.

<sup>1269</sup> GM 66-67. See also Nietzsche's distinction between "stolid metronomes for the slow spirit" and "*We others*" in GS 131.



the tremendous forces of mankind so that the generations can build upon the work of their forefathers-- not only outwardly, but inwardly, organically growing out of them and becoming something stronger [...]"<sup>1270</sup> Zarathustra's intention to 'walk among men as among fragments of the future' and 'compose into one what is fragment and riddle and dreadful chance' presupposes a transcendence and power of divine proportions.<sup>1271</sup> Assuming that such a brash undertaking is even possible in theory, why should Nietzsche be the one to engineer the psychological 'genome' of the human species?

Such an aspiration appears inconsistent with the aspersions Nietzsche cast towards the imposition of cause-and-effect frameworks upon the world. How could he labour to effect a constructive impact upon the entire race when he, along with Kierkegaard, recognized that a person has no guarantee that her smallest action will produce the desired effect in light of the world's dynamic complexities?<sup>1272</sup> According to Nietzsche's revisioned understanding of history-- a paradoxical undertaking given his scepticism that such hermeneutical endeavours are inherently flawed and untruthful, as Smith indicates--<sup>1273</sup> Christianity was a kind of 'brace' which once stabilized European society:

Protracted unfreedom of spirit, mistrustful constraint in the communicability of ideas, the discipline thinkers imposed on themselves to think within an ecclesiastical or courtly rule or under Aristotelian presuppositions, the protracted spiritual will to interpret all events according to a Christian scheme and to rediscover and justify the Christian God in every chance occurrence-- all these violent, arbitrary, severe, gruesome and antirational things have shown themselves to be the means by which the European spirit was disciplined in its strength, ruthless curiosity and subtle flexibility [...]"<sup>1274</sup>

But now, according to Nietzsche, humankind has outgrown its 'school-master' and the support-turned-strait-jacket needs to be removed. Here, Kierkegaard might interject objections to another methodological inconsistency: if Nietzsche truly believed the

<sup>1270</sup> WP 215 [1888].

<sup>1271</sup> Z 161.

<sup>1272</sup> As Mr. A declared, "It also seems to me that with cause and effect the relation does not hold together properly. Sometimes enormous and *gewaltige* [powerful] causes produce a very *klein* [small] and insignificant little effect, sometimes none at all; sometimes a nimble little cause produces a colossal effect." [EO I 25] Kierkegaard, too, was aware of hermeneutical games which the will plays. Subsequently, in the wake of 1848, he wrote: "[P]eople must take a few days to fool one another into thinking that what occurred is what they wanted." [WA 228 (1848)].

<sup>1273</sup> GM xxv.

<sup>1274</sup> BG 111.

conquistador creed that 'that which does not kill us makes us stronger',<sup>1275</sup> how could he hope to breed a super-being if he deprived his protégés of the very adversarial stimuli needed to test and develop the superiority of the 'master spirits'? Furthermore, the identification of an 'undesirable' element such as Christianity is inconsistent with Nietzsche's claims to love unconditionally every feature of the eternally recurring universe.<sup>1276</sup>

Moreover, if all truth is conditional and all morality and principles are self-serving and power-enhancing, Kierkegaard might fairly ask why anyone should bother listening to Nietzsche's 'truths' since his formulations enjoy no privileged status in a world where all truth is merely will to power. Consequently, it seems strange that Nietzsche should object vociferously when the majority of people refuse to acknowledge his truth-claims about universal untruth: "To recognize untruth as a condition of life: that, to be sure, means to resist customary value-sentiments in a dangerous fashion; and a philosophy which ventures to do so places itself, by that act alone, beyond good and evil."<sup>1277</sup> What is the basis of Nietzsche's own philosophical authority if, indeed, "One seeks a picture of the world in that philosophy in which we feel freest; i.e., in which our most powerful drive feels free to function. This will also be the case with me!"<sup>1278</sup> -- particularly when the greatest freedom, apart from that of the philosophical architect of the human race, is allotted to a small, excessively privileged elite? In light of his notebook writings, one must ask who determines a "miscarried life" and how society "ought to prevent them",<sup>1279</sup> who possesses the "genuine charity" to dictate which human sacrifices must be made "for the good of the species".<sup>1280</sup>

Even if Nietzsche could somehow arrogate such moral authority to himself, even if the strong were to thrive under Nietzsche's philosophical regimen, the so-called

<sup>1275</sup> BG 155, TI 33.

<sup>1276</sup> UM 66. However, if the world is truly in a state of flux and becoming as Nietzsche suggested, Kierkegaard might also ponder why the will to power as a foundational principle of life seems invulnerable to transition.

<sup>1277</sup> BG 36. As Safranski observes, although he rejected free will, "Nietzsche would keep right on judging human affairs as though people did have a choice and could make decisions [...]" [176]

<sup>1278</sup> WP 224-225 [1883-1888].

<sup>1279</sup> WP 389 [1888].

'supermen' would ultimately remain in bondage to one person-- Nietzsche himself.<sup>1281</sup> He alone understood the true value of the herd and protected their wanton destruction by short-sighted "exceptions".<sup>1282</sup> He alone appreciated the need to restrict the flow of aristocratic blood and values to the elite and knew why horrible misunderstandings must follow when class divisions are transgressed.<sup>1283</sup> Hence, Nietzsche himself easily surpassed the limited brilliance of the 'higher men':

Very rarely does a higher nature retain sufficient reason for understanding and treating everyday people as such; for the most part, this type assumes that its own passion is present but kept concealed in all men, and this belief even becomes an ardent and eloquent faith. But when such exceptional people do not see themselves as the exception, how can they ever understand the common type and arrive at a fair evaluation of the rule? Thus they, too, speak of the folly, inexpediency, and fantasies of humanity, stunned that the course of the world should be so insane, and puzzled that it won't own up to what 'is needful.' -- This is the eternal justice of those who are noble.<sup>1284</sup>

Nietzsche perhaps recognized the irony of his philosophical supremacy in *Beyond Good and Evil* where he admitted that not all slavery is bad: "[I]t seems that slavery, in the cruder and in the more refined sense, is the indispensable means also for spiritual discipline and breeding."<sup>1285</sup> If Nietzsche's project entails a newer and more sophisticated slavery as a means of advancing the species, Kierkegaard would likely identify his promise of spiritual 'freedom' as merely a rhetorical ploy for masking a more ingenuous mode of tyranny and as little entitled to the epithet 'liberty' as the Christian legalism he zealously denigrated.

#### e. The Myth of Master Power:

It is highly feasible that Kierkegaard's greatest attack upon Nietzsche would be to question the very existence of 'master power' *per se*: to charge that master power is, itself, a myth which western philosophy has constructed, on account of its dialectical interdependence upon so-called 'slave power' and vulnerability to change. Kierkegaard

<sup>1280</sup> WP 142 [1888].

<sup>1281</sup> Nietzsche seemed to prognosticate this paradox in stating, "I have a terrible fear I shall one day be pronounced *holy* [...]" [EH 96]

<sup>1282</sup> GS 131.

<sup>1283</sup> BG 136-137. See also WP [1888] 461.

<sup>1284</sup> GS 78. How Nietzsche himself avoided the 'error of exceptionality' is less apparent.

<sup>1285</sup> BG 112.

contended that secular government is "an indulgence" whose powers teeter precariously on the ignorance or passivity of its 'subjects'.<sup>1286</sup> Master power may arguably be a form of harnessed slave power benefiting a chosen few.<sup>1287</sup> *Réssentiment*, the hallmark of slave existence, may arguably be the will to power *par excellence*:

For an ascetic life is a contradiction in terms: a particular kind of *réssentiment* rules there, that of an unsatisfied instinct and will to power which seeks not to master some isolated aspect of life but life itself, its deepest, strongest, most fundamental conditions [...].<sup>1288</sup>

For this reason, Kierkegaard equated democracy with tyranny in that both amount to rule by fear of men: the difference is merely numerical, and the power of the people is prevalent-- if closely contained-- in all forms of government including monarchies.<sup>1289</sup> Hence, he insisted that the 'common force' employed in the ongoing power struggles between king, clergy, and aristocracy is "always 'the people'".<sup>1290</sup>

The paradox of 'master power' is also evident when one considers Nietzsche's assertion that a 'great spirit' must prove himself against opponents who are evenly matched. But should such a spirit defeat all potential challengers, he must despair and fall into ruin, since he has deprived himself of the source of his strength-- the existence of worthy because equally powerful threats. As Anti-Climacus observed, "[A] master who is a self directly before slaves, indeed really [...] is not a self-- for in both cases there is no standard of measurement."<sup>1291</sup> For this reason, Kierkegaard wrote: "If a capability is actually to be a capability, it must have opposition, because if it has no opposition, then it is either all-powerful or something imaginary."<sup>1292</sup> Moreover, if a mighty tyrant were to arise and successfully implement a new morality, the tyrant invariably makes life existentially easier for slaves and aristocrats alike, insofar as he removes their responsibility to think for themselves, thus volitionally weakening the *Übermensch* 'stock' and subsequently

<sup>1286</sup> WA 215 [1848].

<sup>1287</sup> CD 128. For the support of a leader as nationalistic self-celebration of his supporters, see WA 82.

<sup>1288</sup> GM 97.

<sup>1289</sup> UV 216. See also JP III 486 [1854], JK 234 [1854], JP IV 148 [1848], JP IV 141 [1847], UP I 610.

<sup>1290</sup> JP IV 146 [1848].

<sup>1291</sup> SD 111. See also CD 209. Furthermore, Judge William pointed out that one who defines himself by conflict is never at peace and never 'inside himself' since his focus is always turned outwards. [EO II 143]

<sup>1292</sup> UD 318.

'demoralizing' men.<sup>1293</sup>

Nietzsche probably would have responded that subjugating an opponent does not destroy the threat they pose: "[T]here is in commanding an admission that the absolute power of the opponent has not been vanquished, incorporated, disintegrated. 'Obedience' and 'commanding' are forms of struggle."<sup>1294</sup> However, Kierkegaard might counter by asking whether these never-ending battles for supremacy would permit that stable status quo of prosperity by which the species accumulates its collective energy for the surge of future extraordinary specimens. Nietzsche's concept of power still relies upon external resistances<sup>1295</sup>-- foes to fight, conventions to revoke, an unsuspecting 'bovine' populace to coddle. Freedom is largely dependent upon open and unmitigated hostility between the self and the other.<sup>1296</sup>

The pathetic paradox of a 'great' man who is paralysed by the absence of conflict is cogently depicted by Charlotte Brontë when Jane Eyre observes of St. John Rivers:

Well may he eschew the calm of domestic life; it is not his element: there his faculties stagnate-- they cannot develop or appear to advantage. It is in scenes of strife and danger-- where courage is proved, and energy exercised, and fortitude tasked-- that he will speak and move, the leader and superior.<sup>1297</sup>

Perhaps Nietzsche projected something of himself into Schopenhauer when he once explained,

[L]et us not underestimate the fact that Schopenhauer [...] *needed* enemies to remain in good spirits; that he loved grim, green galling words; that he raged for the sake of raging, out of passion; that he would have fallen ill, become a *pessimist* [...] without his enemies, without Hegel, woman, sensuality, and the whole will to existence, the will to endure.<sup>1298</sup>

Even "systematic ingratitude"-- to employ Tanner's apt phrase<sup>1299</sup>-- cannot negate one's dependence on those upon whom one treads. Ironically, Nietzsche even needed

<sup>1293</sup> For a similar charge that the Jesuits weakened men by placing 'superhuman' ascetic demands upon themselves, see JP III 421-422 [1850].

<sup>1294</sup> WP 342 [1885].

<sup>1295</sup> EH 17.

<sup>1296</sup> WP 493 [1887-1888].

<sup>1297</sup> Brontë 438.

<sup>1298</sup> UM 85.



Christianity, an 'equal' and 'worthy' opponent: "[T]o attack is with me a proof of good will, under certain circumstances of gratitude. I do honour, I confer distinction when I associate my name with a cause, a person: for or against-- that is in this regard a matter of indifference to me."<sup>1300</sup> In light of this essential reliance upon externality in general and 'slave power' in particular, Nietzsche's delineation of 'master power' is, from Kierkegaard's perspective, simply unfounded. Hence, he would concur with Mephistopheles:

No more! That privilege I gladly waive,  
Of hearing about tyrant versus slave [...]  
They fight, they say, dear freedom's cause to save;  
But, seen more clearly, slave is fighting slave."<sup>1301</sup>

#### f. The Myth of Slave Power:

In order for this critique to be genuinely Kierkegaardian, it must be pressed even further, beyond the far-ranging abstraction of superspecies-enhancements to bear upon the existential circumstances of 'that single individual'. Kierkegaard's response to Nietzsche may, thus, be extended by positing that, whereas master power is a myth, given the inextricable interconnectedness of human action and influence regardless of class, slave power is equally a myth, for all people-- irrespective of rank or status-- exhibit the hallmark of aristocratic arrogance: the ability to reduce others into nonentities through sheer spite and/ or indifference. In *Works of Love*, Kierkegaard wrote: "[T]his distinguished corruption teaches the man of distinction that he exists only for distinguished men, that he shall live only in their social circle, that he must not exist for other men, just as they must not exist for him."<sup>1302</sup> Distancing oneself from 'undesirables' may be an aristocratic ideal,<sup>1303</sup> yet Kierkegaard denounced its universal practice:

Whether in the enjoyment of his haughtiness and pride one openly gives other people to understand that they do not exist for him, whether in the nourishment of his arrogance one wants them to be sensitive to this by demanding an expression of slavish subjection from them, or whether stealthily and secretly, simply by

<sup>1299</sup> EH x.

<sup>1300</sup> EH 18.

<sup>1301</sup> Goethe II 104.

<sup>1302</sup> WL 85.

<sup>1303</sup> WL 411.

avoiding any contact with them (perhaps also out of fear that openness would incite men and put him in a dangerous situation), one expresses that they do not exist for him-- these are basically one and the same things. The inhumanness and unchristianness of this does not consist in the manner in which it is done but in wanting to deny one's relationship in the human race with all men, with absolutely every man.<sup>1304</sup>

Kierkegaard proceeded to outline 'passive aggression' as one subtle means by which the underprivileged slave can nullify the existence of the mightiest master, thus demonstrating "the strength of weakness":<sup>1305</sup> "But a disguise of hidden exasperation and a remote intimation of painful dejection will transform the glory and power and eminence into a plague for the mighty, the honoured, the eminent, who nevertheless cannot find anything specific to complain about [....]"<sup>1306</sup> The strongest tyrant cannot force an individual to do anything, according to Kierkegaard: the most he can do is to threaten death, which ironically further undermines his power by elevating the 'victim' with the mantle of martyrdom, as well as publicly legitimating his opponent as a serious threat which demands immediate and extreme measures.<sup>1307</sup> Because the locus of the martyr's power is internal, her resolve is not impacted by external pressure; however, the tyrant, whose power is based externally upon oppositions and achievements, is ultimately weakened by the removal of external opponents like the martyr. The martyr, subsequently, demonstrates her superiority by forcing the tyrant's hand in having her killed.<sup>1308</sup> Even if the tyrant succeeds in arrogating all power from his subjugated populace, he would inadvertently fuel future rebellion by augmenting the means by which the 'powerless' may attain power-- a growing sense of desperation and will to power.<sup>1309</sup>

<sup>1304</sup> WL 84. See also JP IV 140 [1846]: "One ought to exist for all men and not caste-consciously and egotistically seek his own advantage [....]"

<sup>1305</sup> WL 277. See also 213. Judge William described this tactic as 'feminine'. See SW 142-143.

<sup>1306</sup> WL 90.

<sup>1307</sup> For this reason, he advised King Christian VIII that the best course of action against scandal-mongers was to ignore them and thus de-legitimize their boasts. [JK 155 (1849)] Constantin made a similar point of how a 'powerful' man is rendered ludicrous by oppressing a woman. [SW 51] On irony and mockery as "comic power", see SW 366.

<sup>1308</sup> See WA 72-74.

<sup>1309</sup> JP IV 141 [1847], TA 108. Hence, Quidam commented, "A person who is in desperate need always has supernatural powers [....]" [SW 387] In the face of rising populist forces armed with both reflection and the omni-scrutiny of the media, Kierkegaard believed that the time of totalitarian regimes was ending. [JP IV 142 (1847)]

In addition, Kierkegaard firmly believed that every individual possesses some power, though its efficacy is undermined by mismanagement.<sup>1310</sup> The power to exclude and existentially nullify the other is not merely demonstrated when an individual shuns other people-- it is characteristic of every individual's attitude towards God prior to salvation. In *The Concept of Irony*, Kierkegaard referred to the subjective detachment of the ironist as 'negative freedom', "because he is not limited in another. When the individual by being in his other is in his own, then for the first time he is in truth (i.e., positively) free, affirmatively free."<sup>1311</sup> Regardless of intention, both the societal 'master' and 'slave' are unified in collusion in the fundamental revolt of creature against Creator.<sup>1312</sup> According to Kierkegaard, every individual naturally strives to live a life free from divine authority. Her appropriation of sensate power to secure this end becomes a thieving from eternity, an arrogant arrogation of authority after 'deposing' God.<sup>1313</sup> 'Slave' power is, therefore, an illusion, for every individual, regardless of position, wields the most eternally influential 'master' power in existence-- the ability to say 'no' to God. Because of the way in which God lovingly holds back his omnipotence to safeguard the freedom of his creations, Kierkegaard maintained that "a person's selfishness" becomes God's greatest 'opponent': "There is only one who can hinder God, him who indeed is eternally strongest, in becoming the strongest-- this one is the person himself."<sup>1314</sup> As Anti-Climacus stated: "The powerful can cruelly have a person be tortured-- but the weak can cruelly make it impossible for love to help them, alas, the only thing for which love asked and so ardently."<sup>1315</sup>

In reality, it is humankind which has abdicated its lofty and privileged position as

<sup>1310</sup> UV 295-296. This occurs particularly when individuals misguidedly focus their wills upon attaining 'singular' purposes which are not, in fact, singular-- temporal externalities which are notoriously transient and uncontrollable. Hence, Climacus contended: "[I]t is a contradiction absolutely to will something finite, since the finite must indeed come to an end, and consequently there must come a time when it can no longer be willed." [UP I 394] Only a person who wills to obtain the unchanging favour of God will possess an undivided purpose which, on account of grace, can never be thwarted. [UV 25-27]

<sup>1311</sup> CI 228.

<sup>1312</sup> On the spiritual culpability of all, see FS 64.

<sup>1313</sup> See UV 193: "If human beings want to resemble God by ruling, they have forgotten God; then God has departed and they are playing the rulers in God's absence."

<sup>1314</sup> CD 129. See also UD 226: "[T]here is truly only one eternal object of wonder-- that is God-- and only one possible hindrance to wonder-- and that is a person when he himself wants to be something."

<sup>1315</sup> PC 77. See also CD 129.

worshiper of the one true God, according to Kierkegaard,<sup>1316</sup> and has thereby become an existential brigand: "To forget God-- is not this the same as stealing your whole existence!"<sup>1317</sup> Subsequently, sensate authority is a limited and therefore limiting resource, for it may be acquired illegitimately and necessarily deprives another: "*Every earthly or worldly good is in itself selfish, begrudging; its possession is begrudging or is envy and in one way or another must make others poorer--* what I have someone else cannot have; the more I have, the less someone else must have."<sup>1318</sup> This is why he queried: "Is it really so glorious to become *the* superior person no one else can become; is it not disconsolate instead!"<sup>1319</sup> Kierkegaard regarded societal distinctions in class or rank as illusory, "the enchantment of actuality", comparing them to make-believe roles on the stage: "But when the curtain falls, the one who played the king and the one who played the beggar, and all the others-- they are all quite alike, all one and the same actors."<sup>1320</sup> Hence, Kierkegaard asserted that all people, regardless of their temporal positions are simultaneously spiritually weak yet existentially strong enough to resist God:

It is corruption when the poor man shrivels up in his poverty so that he lacks the courage of will to be built up by Christianity. It is also corruption when a prominent man wraps himself in his prominence in such a way that he shrinks from being built up by Christianity. And it is also corruption if he whose distinction is to be like the majority of people never comes out of this distinction through Christian elevation.<sup>1321</sup>

g. A Personal Defence:

As for Nietzsche's accusation that Kierkegaard was cunningly accumulating power for himself through the influence he sought to exert over Christendom, Kierkegaard would have protested that he did everything possible to prevent the acquisition of either fame or following. His perennial aloofness, pseudonymous subterfuge, avoidance of formulating dogmatic decrees, periodic disavowals of any apostolic authority and personal Christian

<sup>1316</sup> CD 64: "But the Christian knows that to need God is a human being's perfection." See also UV 193, UD 297.

<sup>1317</sup> UV 211. See also CD 99 where he wrote of temporality: "[I]t becomes something by stealing the power of eternity from a person and then in return remains with him and makes him its slave." On future anxiety as power surrendered by the individual, see UD 18.

<sup>1318</sup> CD 115.

<sup>1319</sup> UV 226.

<sup>1320</sup> WL 95. See also CD 53.

'excellence', and public notoriety in the wake of *The Corsair* scandal thoroughly prevented his acquisition of sensate authority since, "[O]ne single person can never literally become a physical power."<sup>1322</sup> With regards to his writings and expertise on true Christian belief, Kierkegaard would have maintained that he was only doing his duty as a truth-witness, reminding himself as much as others of the need for humility and service, "not by domineering and wanting to force others to obey God, but by unconditionally obeying as an individual".<sup>1323</sup> If Nietzsche misinterpreted Kierkegaard's true motives, it was merely because he, too, like the Danish masses, was unable "to conceive of an intelligent man not coveting status and power."<sup>1324</sup>

#### h. The Ultimate Empowerment:

Contrary to the universal practice of negating the meaningful existence of others through indifference or animosity, Kierkegaard emphasized that, because every individual is equidistant from the opportunity of a salvific relationship with God, "[T]he possibility of the good exists at every moment for the other person".<sup>1325</sup> Hence, in his interpretation of Matthew 5:21-22, he wrote: "Even if one does not take murder upon his conscience, he nevertheless gives up the hated one as hopeless and consequently takes possibility away from him. But does this not mean to kill him spiritually."<sup>1326</sup> The alteration of external conditions to redistribute power allocation was, for Kierkegaard, irrelevant for alleviating the true spiritual plight of individuals. Hence, he cited the recent horrors of the French Revolution as an excruciating reminder that radical changes to societal conditions can neither end cruelty nor rehabilitate the human heart.<sup>1327</sup> The only means of true empowerment is spiritual freedom, the humble acknowledgement that all individuals stand equally prodigal and helpless before God.<sup>1328</sup>

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<sup>1321</sup> WL 85.

<sup>1322</sup> TM 77.

<sup>1323</sup> WL 121-122.

<sup>1324</sup> TC 217.

<sup>1325</sup> WL 80.

<sup>1326</sup> WL 240.

<sup>1327</sup> WL 89.

<sup>1328</sup> Nietzsche specifically blamed Christianity for the "crazy" concept of "equality of souls before God."



According to the Christian faith, "God exists and is the only master [...]"<sup>1329</sup> On account of the limitations of sensate authority, Kierkegaard insisted that God alone, whose power is qualitatively other and, therefore, incontestable, can truly free a human being without enslaving her through obligation, threat of the gift's removal, or a slavish dependency upon the gift itself. Because love, "the strongest power in a man",<sup>1330</sup> is universally available to all who are willing,<sup>1331</sup> God may truly liberate the individual from the tyranny of the foulest ruler or the cruellest fate, abolishing slavery to the outcome and rendering God's followers 'more than conquerors'.<sup>1332</sup> Subsequently, Kierkegaard proclaimed: "In suffering, bold confidence is able to take power from the world and has the power to change scorn into honor, victory into downfall!"<sup>1333</sup> Nietzsche was right to declare that human beings are 'destined' to rule,<sup>1334</sup> according to Kierkegaard, but this rule is not founded upon sensate power and oppression of the other, but rather upon eternal love and service to the other.<sup>1335</sup>

Ironically, both Kierkegaard and Nietzsche were probably aware of the paradox of sacrilege: that the 'gods' are only worth robbing so long as they remain the treasuries of value and significance in society. Kierkegaard has decisively shown that rebellion depends dialectically upon that which it rebels against. How long, he might ask, can "hatred, envy, covetousness, and lust for domination" remain "life-conditioning emotions"<sup>1336</sup> after love, peace, and harmony have all but disappeared? Furthermore, Nietzsche admitted that one can never destroy an enemy if one is to be continuously strengthened by ceaseless conflict, even an enemy as despised as Christianity: "The continuance of the Christian ideal is one of the most desirable things there are-- even for the sake of ideals that want to stand beside it and perhaps above it-- they must have opponents, strong opponents, if they are to become strong."<sup>1337</sup> Without a robust church to rebel against, the victory becomes hollow and the

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[WP 401 (1888)]

<sup>1329</sup> WL 122.

<sup>1330</sup> WL 160.

<sup>1331</sup> For this reason, he considered his own accomplishments as nothing to boast about. [PV 115]

<sup>1332</sup> JP IV 401 [1851], CD 400 [1848], UV 303.

<sup>1333</sup> UV 331.

<sup>1334</sup> BG 151.

<sup>1335</sup> UV 189, UD 84.

<sup>1336</sup> BG 53.

<sup>1337</sup> WP 197 [1887]. See also HA 240.

detractor may be left with an unnerving ambiguity of his own identity as to whether he is truly rebelling against Christianity or rather aligning himself with a righteously indignant 'remnant', who-- albeit inadvertently-- assists the call for reform.

## Chapter 8: Conclusion: Expanding the Dialogue:

In conclusion, this chapter will briefly highlight some of the strengths and weaknesses of both positions and suggest their theological relevance for contemporary debate on the issue of power.

### I. Strengths:

Both Nietzsche and Kierkegaard must be commended for their brilliant and scintillating critiques of nineteenth-century excesses, their passion against mediocrity and theoretical abstraction, their insistence that, whatever it means to be human, it inevitably involves "a process of becoming",<sup>1338</sup> their bravery to confront the brutalities, suffering, and incongruities of existence, their recognition of the uses and abuses of a personal hermeneutic by which people "fool one another into thinking that what occurred is what they wanted",<sup>1339</sup> and their integrity to resist endorsing the status quo, whether political, academic, or ecclesiastical.

In particular, Friedrich Nietzsche justly challenged the stagnancy and hypocrisy inherent in a self-proclaimed 'Christian' nation which brazenly sanctioned modes of power and affluence which blatantly contradict the life and teachings of Christ.<sup>1340</sup> His exposure of subtler uses of coercion such as language, the hermeneutical redaction of history-- whether national or personal-- and the deleterious dehumanization of the 'less fortunate' under the guise of 'Christian charity' is both provocative and poignant. Nietzsche's exuberance for the 'natural' world and willingness to embrace topics such as passion and sexuality, which had been historically denigrated is both admirable and daring, offsetting the unhealthy existential escapism which often masquerades as 'sound' Christian theology. He lucidly reflected the dangers of overemphasizing an abstract, disembodied transcendence: "For there is nothing at all we could state about the metaphysical world except its differentness, a differentness inaccessible and incomprehensible to us. It would

<sup>1338</sup> SD 60.

<sup>1339</sup> WA 228 [1848].

<sup>1340</sup> WP 97-98 [1888], TI 160.

be a thing with negative qualities."<sup>1341</sup> Hence, he offered a cogent reminder that Christianity is a historically embodied and 'Incarnational' religion in more ways than one. However, Nietzsche's desire to protect the 'defenceless' is noble, though restricting that category to the nobles is defenceless. His aversion to illusion and earnestness for truth ironically paralleled the efforts of many who inhabited the robust centre of Christian tradition, including Søren Kierkegaard, who would have heartily approved of such uncompromising passion.<sup>1342</sup>

Nietzsche rightly abhorred the feeble 'Christian' rationalization that inward 'faith' does not culminate in consistent outward behaviour-- under the pretence of avoiding 'works righteousness'-- and, thus, argued for commensurability between internality and externality in order to combat existential indolence. Kierkegaard rightly opposed the evaluation of inward faith solely on the basis of external behaviour and argued for the incommensurability between internality and externality in order to combat hypocrisy. Kierkegaard provided invaluable assistance in preserving the importance of the individual in the face of collectivist pressures which sought harmony and homogeneity at the expense of particularity. He unequivocally grounded human well-being, freedom, and identity upon the unchangeable and incontestable love and freedom of God, while unwaveringly emphasizing the qualitative 'chasm' of heterogeneity which separated God from creation. At the same time, he exposed the implicit dangers of immanence, wherein humankind re-casts God in its own image and thereby faces an 'all-too-human' autocrat, whose power and freedom-- being merely quantitatively different-- must rival, oppress, and/ or be supplemented by our own. His penetrating analysis of the shortcomings of sensate authority and the church's catastrophic compromise of endeavouring to secure spiritual goals by means of sensate authority is both brilliant and timely. Undaunted by the assertion that a transcendental God is a mythological attempt to mask existential cowardice, Kierkegaard coherently argued that the formulations of 'master power' and 'slave power' are themselves mythological attempts at masking existential cowardice based on alienation from and avoidance of God.

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<sup>1341</sup> HA 18.

<sup>1342</sup> "We need dynamic personalities, unselfish persons who are not immersed and exhausted in endless consideration for job, wife, and children." [BA 224 (1847)]

## II. Shortcomings:

### A. Nietzsche:

#### 1. Methodological Inconsistencies:

The greatest difficulty with the tenability of Nietzsche's position centres on the glaring inconsistencies of his variegated threads of thought. Despite his suspicion of the hermeneutical 'shell-games' of history and the contention that he was born ahead of his time,<sup>1343</sup> Nietzsche promulgated his own historical schemas and emulated several traits of the seventeenth century:

The seventeenth century is aristocratic, imposes order, looks down haughtily on the animalic, is severe against the heart, not cozy, without sentiment, 'un-German', averse to what is burlesque and what is natural, inclined to generalizations and sovereign confronted with the past-- for it believes in itself. Much beast of prey *au fond*, much ascetic habit to remain master. The century of strong will; also of strong passion.<sup>1344</sup>

By contrast to seventeenth-century "Aristocratism", "Descartes, rule of reason, testimony of the sovereignty of the will", the eighteenth century was characterized by "Feminism"-- "Rousseau, rule of feeling, testimony of the sovereignty of the senses, mendacious"-- while the nineteenth century revolved upon "Animalism": "Schopenhauer, rule of craving, testimony of the sovereignty of animality, more honest but gloomy".<sup>1345</sup> Despite his aversion to piecemeal philosophy,<sup>1346</sup> Nietzsche himself was highly selective in his emphasis upon seventeenth-century 'aristocratism', eighteenth-century emotional epiphanies, and nineteenth-century 'institutionalization' of instinct. Though he delighted in 'deconstructing' previous philosophies-- "[T]he philosopher believes that the value of his philosophy lies in the whole, in the building: posterity discovers it in the bricks with which he built and which one then often used again for better building [....]"<sup>1347</sup>-- the

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<sup>1343</sup> EH 39.

<sup>1344</sup> WP 59 [1887].

<sup>1345</sup> WP 58-59 [1887].

<sup>1346</sup> BG 40, Z 142.

<sup>1347</sup> NR 33.



disassembly of his own thought was insufferable.<sup>1348</sup>

Although Nietzsche vehemently opposed Christianity as 'sickness' and "up till now mankind's greatest misfortune"<sup>1349</sup>-- a blatant contradiction of his assertions that rendering moral judgments is the greatest injustice<sup>1350</sup>-- he endorsed it as a useful Machiavellian means for securing political stability,<sup>1351</sup> and based many of his formulations upon Lutheran doctrines.<sup>1352</sup> Despite his abhorrence of plebeian 'levelling' and obvious love of diversity, he has, in one monumental revaluation, flattened all human value systems, civilizations, arts, knowledge, love, and science into 'mechanical' manoeuvres for asserting power. While Nietzsche deplored the Hegelian banishment of the natural world and the Christian negation of 'natural man', he embarked upon a personal hermeneutic which ultimately minimizes the world as a hermeneutical, aesthetic construct, and seeks to negate the human race itself-- "the experimental material, the tremendous surplus of failures"<sup>1353</sup>-- in his attempt to breed the superspecies. In doing so, Nietzsche focused on generalities such as 'the species' and 'the race', leaving little room for the individual in his grand formulations.<sup>1354</sup> His naturalistic embrace of the amoral cosmos and his creative anti-realism which apparently collapses ontology into human subjectivity is highly

<sup>1348</sup> Z 195, EH 96.

<sup>1349</sup> TI 181.

<sup>1350</sup> NR 71-72.

<sup>1351</sup> BG 86, TI 184. Presumably, Nietzsche was able to differentiate between the Machiavellian pretence of the 'true ruler' and the "moral hypocrisy" of contemporary leaders who "appear as 'the first servant of the people'". [BG 120-121]

<sup>1352</sup> In his introduction to *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, Hollingdale identifies no fewer than six major parallels: 'amor fati' as the Lutheran acceptance of God willing all events in life; 'eternal recurrence' as Christianity's affirmation of life and the unchangeable nature of God; 'will to power' as God's inner grace which leads to outer victories; 'living dangerously' as the radical nature of Jesus' challenge to the religious conventions of his day; the 'Great Noon' as the Second Coming of Christ; and the '*Übermensch*' as a model of God Himself. [Z 28-29] I would also posit a strong dose of 'remnant' theology, the belief that only a portion but not the whole shall be saved, and 'messianic' theology, a characteristic feature of the destined *Übermensch*, who would, in effect, 'redeem' the entire chain of historical unfoldings. He also borrowed heavily from Christian asceticism, particularly in his insistence that self-mastery lies at the heart of any 'higher man'. [TI 104] Despite his criticisms of Christianity on this point, [GM 49] Nietzsche, too, has negated the meaninglessness of human suffering within a 'salvation' narrative. Salomé contends that he infused his personal narrative with "mystical significance" [153] In return, Luther might have levelled his castigation of the Pharisees' 'God-complex' at Nietzsche: "Men of this kind wish to be like God, sufficient in themselves, pleasing themselves, glorying in themselves, under obligation to no one, and so on." [Selections 90]

<sup>1353</sup> WP 380 [1888].

<sup>1354</sup> Feuerbach traces the 'pagan' roots of this approach: "The idea of man as an individual was to the ancients a secondary one, attained through the idea of the species. Though they thought highly of the race, highly of the excellences of mankind, [...] they nevertheless thought slightly of the individual." [151]

incongruous. Yet another inconsistency lies in Nietzsche's aversion to infinity as a threat to the material universe, which he ironically sought to 'infinite' through endless hermeneutical interpretations: "[T]he world has become 'infinite' for us all over again, inasmuch as we cannot reject the possibility that *it may include infinite interpretations*."<sup>1355</sup> While he championed release from outdated conventions and oppressive superstitions, he bound humanity with the shackles of determinism-- both biological and sociological-- via a loveless, goalless 'Fate', banishing humankind to perpetual revolutions on a cosmic 'carrousel' under the auspices of 'true freedom'. Subsequently, Unamuno remarks, "And why does the lion laugh? I think he laughs with rage, because he can never succeed in finding consolation in the thought that he has been the same lion before and is destined to be the same lion again."<sup>1356</sup>

Furthermore, while he advocated endorsement of a plurality of perspectives and rejected the chimerical farce of arriving at 'the truth', Nietzsche became curiously irate when his unique perspective did not receive privileged status.<sup>1357</sup> He placed these words in the mouth of Zarathustra: "'This is now *my* way: where is yours?' Thus I answered those who asked me 'the way'. For *the* way does not exist!"<sup>1358</sup> Yet he later commented on this fictional character, "Zarathustra is more truthful than any other thinker."<sup>1359</sup> The Heraclitean effort to preserve the ontological 'flux' by withstanding the solidification of all 'becomings' into 'beings' seems far more 'superhuman' than Nietzsche admitted. To the extent that humans are expected to accept their allotted positions in society as either *Übermensch* forebears or aristocratic facilitators, Nietzsche's views rest upon the "naive" presumption, according to Climacus, that, "if only the objective truth stands firm, the subject will be ready and willing to slip it on."<sup>1360</sup>

Nietzsche's optimism in the rise of new and stronger configurations of power from

<sup>1355</sup> GS 337.

<sup>1356</sup> Unamuno 110-111.

<sup>1357</sup> It is possible that this is somewhat unfair. See Clark, who argues that he is not rejecting 'truth' *per se* but "metaphysical truth". [848] She rightly reiterates that perspectivism is a claim about knowledge, not truth. [849]

<sup>1358</sup> Z 213.

<sup>1359</sup> EH 98.

<sup>1360</sup> UP I 37.

the ashes of conflict and animosity, and his confidence that he can chisel new behaviours and attitudes into human 'bedrock' despite the seeming imperviousness of "bad blood"<sup>1361</sup> seem audacious at best and contradictory at worst. On the one hand, he espoused the ineluctability of cosmic movements such as eternal recurrence while, on the other hand, the formulations of a single man, such as Kant, can apparently derail the astoundingly 'fragile' inexorability of the natural universe's drive towards developing quintessential units of power-- or at least delay it.<sup>1362</sup> The fact that the 'telos-less' cosmos in general and the pre-eminent 'masters' in particular require the assistance of a philosophical overlord and 'defender of the fate' is rather ironical indeed, particularly when the strength of the forebears is predicated upon the existence of powerful opponents such as 'Christianity' and its so-called 'slave morality', which Nietzsche strove so valiantly to neutralize. This vociferous opponent of transcendence risked violating his own tenet in his derision of Christianity, for if humankind truly inhabits a 'natural' universe, does Nietzsche not posit an otherworldly heterogeneity when he criticizes the Christian faith as 'unnatural'? Indeed, how can anything be 'unnatural' in a universe where there is nothing but nature, and from what Archimedean point does Nietzsche presume to distinguish between the two? The incongruities in Nietzsche's thought are legion. As he longed to preserve the present from the denigration of tyrannical historical traditions, he curiously drew upon a sentimentalized golden past of aristocratic supremacy in order to usher in a glorious future. While he expounded an Epicurean enthusiasm for the Dionysian delights of corporeal existence, he also advocated a Stoic detachment in order to transcend the impact of externals.<sup>1363</sup> He vigorously denied the efficacy of human powers of judgment and conscious free will, while at the same time championing the victor's cry, 'I willed it thus!' Nietzsche either had the worst sense of inconsistency or the greatest-- and wickedest-- sense of humour of any philosopher.

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<sup>1361</sup> EH 18.

<sup>1362</sup> WP 64 [1887].

<sup>1363</sup> On his view of socialization as antithetical to self-creation, see Griffiths 124.

## 2. Rudimentary Rehabilitations:

In order to consolidate the violent incongruities inherent in Nietzsche's thought, one must walk an epistemological tightrope between the extremities of ontological conservatism which fossilizes truth, and a rampaging nihilism which utterly disintegrates it. The theorist must formulate Nietzsche's insistence upon the commensurability between the external and the internal without enslaving the individual to the outcome. Ironically, Nietzsche's spectacular inconsistencies may be better stabilized within a Judaeo-Christian reference point. While Nietzsche regarded himself as an 'outsider' confronting the corruption within Christian morality, he bore a marked resemblance to the biblical prophets.<sup>1364</sup> Exposing hypocrisy, complacency, and indolence, Nietzsche charged that matters of truth and virtue do not lead to material advantages and prosperity but, in fact, are detrimental to one's earthly well-being.<sup>1365</sup> Though he himself rigorously disputed its motives, Nietzsche recognized that the pursuit of true virtue leads to self-debasement and loss, not personal aggrandizement and temporal successes. Furthermore, his 'Big Brawl' theory of the universe bears more than a passing resemblance to the Christian doctrine of universal discord in the aftermath of sin.

Nietzsche also played the prophet when denouncing humankind's ability to judge based on appearances of actions, recognizing that the intentions behind a morally courageous act are often rather ignoble-- stubbornness, close-mindedness, cowardice, pride, selfishness.<sup>1366</sup> Because of the opaque nature of the human heart, Nietzsche insisted that judgment must be suspended or at least tempered by an awareness of the judge's hermeneutical biases and limitations.<sup>1367</sup> With his uncanny 'nose' for spiritual mediocrity and an almost 'priestly' concern for purity, he relentlessly reminded Christendom that their

<sup>1364</sup> Though Tanner would add, a 'prophet of the apocalypse'. [*Nietzsche* 32] Intriguing, Nietzsche's favourite deconstructive metaphor was echoed by Jeremiah: "Is not my word like fire, says the Lord, and like a hammer that breaks a rock in pieces?" [Je 23:29] Salomé regarded his greatest 'intellectual disposition' to be his "religious genius". [24, 88] For Nietzsche's impact upon early twentieth-century Russian religious thought, see Rosenthal 862-864.

<sup>1365</sup> GS 92.

<sup>1366</sup> GS 264.

<sup>1367</sup> GS 265.

poor excuse for piety-- their "religion of comfortableness"<sup>1368</sup>-- was a pathetic substitute for genuine moral courage, which relinquished the safe havens of conventionality and abandoned high ease for high seas. From his prophetic platform, Zarathustra exhorted: "And whatever harm the wicked may do, the harm the good do is the most harmful harm [...] For the good-- *cannot* create: they are always the beginning of the end:-- they crucify him who writes new values on new law-tables [...]"<sup>1369</sup> With a prophet's glacial glare, Nietzsche predicted woe and suffering for the spiritually self-assured, who lackadaisically loitered around a lower-case Christianity, and sternly ordered them to 'move along'.

In retrospect, some of Nietzsche's most virulent attacks were not directed at Christianity *per se*, but rather at its corruption in Christendom-- a status quo spirituality of complacency and decadence grown powerful to the point of undermining the development of human excellence for which Nietzsche longed:

I have the greatest respect for the ascetic ideal *in so far as it is honest!* As long as it believes in itself and refrains from farcical play-acting! But I dislike all these coquettish little bugs-- whose insatiable ambition is to give off the smell of the infinite, until ultimately the infinite smells of bugs [...]"<sup>1370</sup>

Arguably, Nietzsche even sought to strengthen Christianity by incinerating its dross for his own purposes of preparing a fitter mettle against which to steel future generations of 'higher men': "I have declared war on the anemic Christian ideal (together with what is closely related to it), not with the aim of destroying it but only of putting an end to its tyranny and clearing the way for new ideals, for *more robust* ideals [...]"<sup>1371</sup> Hence, Nietzsche's true enemies were not "the most serious Christians", who "have always been well disposed toward me",<sup>1372</sup> but "the one kind of enemy who is capable of causing the ascetic ideal real *harm*: those play-actors who act out this ideal-- for they arouse suspicion."<sup>1373</sup> Kierkegaard could not have agreed more.

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<sup>1368</sup> GS 270.

<sup>1369</sup> Z 229.

<sup>1370</sup> GM 132.

<sup>1371</sup> WP 197 [1887].

<sup>1372</sup> EH 18.



## B. Kierkegaard:

### 1. Temporal Shortcomings:

As with Nietzsche, Kierkegaard's problems stem from the extremities of his thought. Although his indefatigable insistence upon the incommensurability between internality and externality was a powerful deterrent against hypocrisy, it threatened to reduce Christianity to a private, quietist religion if not coupled with a determined, proactive resolve to passionate involvement in one's society,<sup>1374</sup> something Anti-Climacus emphasized when guarding against spiritual indolence:

The earnestness of life is not all this pressure of finitude and busyness with livelihood, job, office, and procreation, but the earnestness of life is to *will* to be, to *will* to express the perfection (ideality) in the dailyness of actuality, to *will* it, so that one does not to one's own ruin once and for all busily abandon it or conceitedly take it in vain as a dream-- what a tragic lack of earnestness in both cases!-- but humbly wills it in actuality.<sup>1375</sup>

To the degree that Kierkegaard solely emphasized a faith that is supremely focused 'inwards' upon one's relationship with God, his position is susceptible to Feuerbach's criticism: "*Nature, the world, has no value, no interest for Christians. The Christian thinks only of himself and the salvation of his soul.*"<sup>1376</sup>

Kierkegaard's position is also not without its incongruities: on one level, he emphasized the sinfulness of humankind and its natural aversion to the truth, yet he posited a seemingly contradictory 'transcendence' in advocating the continuous refusal to secularize the Kingdom of God or employ the sensate powers of wealth, reason, or government to aid or abet Christian aims. He himself was not able to obey faultlessly this edict, relying upon his education, brilliant mind, and rich inheritance to sequester himself from vocational pursuits and write his long, sophisticated treatises as an integral part of his Christian witness. By deploying his use of irony, keen rational abilities, polemical

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<sup>1373</sup> GM 134.

<sup>1374</sup> See, for example, Frater Taciturnus' statement: "The religious outcome, indifferent toward the external, is assured only in the internal, that is, in faith." [SW 442]

<sup>1375</sup> PC 189-190.

prowess, and literary skills, he, too, can be found guilty of indirectly committing the 'sin of Uzzah' and, reaching out to steady the apparent precariousness of the 'ark of God',<sup>1377</sup> thus 'weakening' Christianity by the very act of 'defending' it.<sup>1378</sup> Furthermore, if sensate authority truly poses no threat to spiritual authority, a sceptic can question the need for Kierkegaard's highly spirited polemics.<sup>1379</sup>

Although he strove to be freed from the impact of externality, Kierkegaard, too, was eventually worn down by the constant affliction and scorn he invoked-- much of it intentionally-- lapsing into further bitterness and isolation despite his recognition of the importance of love and neighbour. At the height of polemical frenzy, Kierkegaard committed the very atrocity he railed so forcefully against throughout his authorship: quantifying God within human limitations and standards. Hence, in *The Moment*, he presented an astonishingly 'human' description of God's waning patience when he stated that the worst punishment is for God, "not to will to be aware [...] of the nothing that you are. For an omnipotent being it must, if one may speak this way, be an immense effort to be obliged to look after a nothing, to be aware of a nothing, to be concerned about a nothing."<sup>1380</sup> He similarly appeared to anthropomorphize God's love when he once compared 'petty prayers' -- prayers for attaining 'worldly' aims rather than their banishment-- to the unwarranted badgering of an exasperated doctor by daft parents who repeatedly summon him for every 'imaginary' symptom of their child.<sup>1381</sup> However, such references are still exceptions to the predominant theme of unconditional divine love

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<sup>1376</sup> Feuerbach 287.

<sup>1377</sup> See II Samuel 6:6-7.

<sup>1378</sup> Kierkegaard might have justified his use of reason as necessary to clear away faulty reasoning and 'till the existential soil' in preparation for the 'seed' of revelation since, in the paradoxical words of Climacus, "[T]he maximum of any eventual understanding is to understand that it cannot be understood." [UP I 214] Earlier, Climacus justified apologetics on the basis that it elucidated the God-concept, in addition to demarcating the qualitative leap which separates revelation from all other human knowledge. [PF 43] Hence, Climacus was not a 'fideist' in the sense that the understanding has no role to play in faith-- human reason simply cannot supply the positive content of faith, but it can approach the near edge of the qualitative 'chasm' which separates God and creation, though only under the transforming influence of divine grace.

<sup>1379</sup> Kierkegaard's defence, though easily misunderstood by the sceptic, is brilliantly articulated by Jones: "Defending such concepts is not an attempt to make them plausible before the court of immanent human understanding. Rather, defense involves clarifying the concepts over against their illegitimate cousins, against the counterfeit substitutes, against the vain and trivializing uses which deflect and obscure the true character and point of Christian faith." ["Remarks" 246]

<sup>1380</sup> TM 307.

<sup>1381</sup> CD 168.

which is prevalent throughout his corpus, and the fact that God loves sinful individuals inspires greater wonderment for Kierkegaard than God's ability to create the universe *ex nihilo*.<sup>1382</sup>

## 2. Making Applications:

In order to further Kierkegaard's insights, one must relentlessly press his thought in the direction of community and commitment to relationality, lest a well-intentioned attitude of love atrophy into well-intentioned theory.<sup>1383</sup> Theologically, this could be accomplished by emphasizing the relational nature of the Gospel, preserving Kierkegaard's central focus upon the individual's relationship with God and re-articulating the communal nature of God himself in the persons of the Trinity, as well as the essential role of the Holy Spirit operating in the life, unity, and action of the Christian church. A fuller statement of Trinitarian theology, ecclesiology, and pneumatology would highlight the valuable contributions which Kierkegaard makes to Christian thought while demonstrating the real and practical nature of the Gospel's power to unite and restore that which is alienated and damaged.

One must also challenge his epistemological flirtation with deception to avoid undermining the importance of truth for the Christian.<sup>1384</sup> There are three levels of divine 'deception' in Kierkegaard's writing: first, the inevitable distortions of truth which occur when it is communicated in a world saturated by untruth;<sup>1385</sup> second, Jesus' 'deceptive' use of political terminology and playing upon Israel's nationalistic expectations during the triumphal entry into Jerusalem;<sup>1386</sup> third, Anti-Climacus posited "a necessary educational

<sup>1382</sup> CD 128.

<sup>1383</sup> I disagree, however, with Matthis' contention that Kierkegaard has subsumed 'the other' "as an idea within the self", [419] a position espoused by Buber. [Connell and Evans vii-ix] For the positives and problems of Kierkegaard's "open-ended" conception of the individual, see Hannay 326-328.

<sup>1384</sup> Norris accuses him of functionally endorsing Nietzsche's devaluation of truth. [105] Although Norris is overstating his case, Nietzsche could have easily adduced Kierkegaard's duplicity in support of his view that the will to truth, when pursued in all earnestness, nihilistically exposes the fictitious nature of its truth claims.

<sup>1385</sup> See, for example, TM 414 [1851], BA 170, FT 185. The Incarnation is 'deceptive' insofar as it constitutes "the absolute unrecognizability, when one is God, then to be an individual human being", entailing "the greatest possible distance, the infinitely qualitative distance, from being God, and therefore it is the most profound incognito." [PC 127-128]

<sup>1386</sup> WA 61-62. He softened this stance in FS 61: "If he [Jesus] works for it [truth] with all his might then he

guile" whereby God-- presumably temporarily-- does not inform the believer of the inevitable suffering which will ensue when serving truth in a world of untruth.<sup>1387</sup>

Anti-Climacus justified deception on the basis that it was not 'true' deception if it "deceived him into the truth".<sup>1388</sup> On a personal level, the use of deception was justified by Quidam to break off his engagement with Quaadam, "provided I have not my welfare in mind but hers."<sup>1389</sup> Quidam linked this "teleological suspension of the ethical principle of speaking the whole truth" with Christ's decision to withhold the entire truth from his disciples prior to his betrayal and execution because, "as yet they cannot bear it."<sup>1390</sup> It is significant that Kierkegaard later rejected his deployment of indirect communication and all but abandoned pseudonymous composition.<sup>1391</sup> Although one must realistically confront the fractured realities of human existence, the heterogeneity of God's freedom and power must be reflected by Christian resistance to deception as a means of confronting deception if divine victory is as certain as Kierkegaard would have us believe.

### III. Relevance for Contemporary Power Issues:

A thorough analysis of the implications of Nietzsche's and Kierkegaard's thought for contemporary discussion on the issues of power lies beyond the scope of this project;

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is working himself toward certain downfall. On the other hand, if he introduces the whole truth too quickly his downfall will come too soon. Consequently, working against himself, he must for a time seem to enter into illusions in order to ensure the downfall all the more thoroughly."

<sup>1387</sup> PC 186.

<sup>1388</sup> PC 190. For use of the "pious fraud", see PV 7. On the 'aesthetic writings' as "deception", see PV 77. See also UV 123, FT 359 [1844].

<sup>1389</sup> SW 230. Is it possible that Kierkegaard became entangled in his own disguises? This is plausible if Meier Goldschmidt's assessment is honest: "[T]here had come to be something about him that gave him the appearance of standing at a distance, observing ironically, like one who with conscious superiority-- a superiority that seemed to be based both on his intellect and his reputed wealth-- could understand everything, also all cares and sorrows, and give the word but not share it. That could, in fact, be a pretence that would vanish if one followed him into his cubbyhole, but who could do that, and how much trouble do we take in that respect with regard to each other before it is too late? Egotistically preoccupied as we generally are [...]" [TC 147-148] The deliberate sabotaging of Quidam's engagement for the spiritual 'benefit' of his fiancée bore more than a passing resemblance to Kierkegaard's dis-engagement from Regine Olsen insofar as he 'played the cad' in order to ease her suffering-- a point to which *The Corsair* gleefully alluded. [TC 118-119] On Kierkegaard's admission of his heightened powers of "dissimulative art" from an early age, see PV 79.

<sup>1390</sup> SW 230.

<sup>1391</sup> In an 1848 journal entry, he deemed "the arts of the maieutic" as an "unchristian way [...]" even though useful for a time and relatively justified simply because Christendom has become paganism." [CD 422 (1848)]

however, a few general observations may be offered. In the highly charged political landscape of the twenty-first century, both Nietzsche and Kierkegaard can serve as models for rigorously self-scrutinizing one's personal, ethical position for underlying biases, self-interest, and blind spots. They also provide a particularly timely critique of liberal democracy, particularly for proponents who are advocating worldwide democraticization and consumer-based egalitarianism as a panacea for systemic problems of poverty, violence, and material inequities. As Jackson observes, "No external power (neither Adam's sin nor God's grace) can compel a moral choice [...]"<sup>1392</sup> -- to which one might add trade embargos, constitutional amendments, and pre-emptive strikes. Both thinkers also provide extremely important reminders of how quickly human structures of power-- whether political, economic, or ecclesiological-- may be 'deified' and incorporated into a new or existing status quo, how easily the name of 'God' can be invoked to sanction or excuse national interests or institutionalized injustices, and how susceptible our theological formulations may be to hierarchical 'corrosion'.<sup>1393</sup> However, in light of the volatile and belligerent conditions in many regions of the world, Nietzsche's attempt to subsume all human activity within a matrix of agonistic power relations seems reductionistic and ultimately unhelpful for arriving at more constructive means of mediating human differences within the framework of social justice.<sup>1394</sup> Such a presupposition may easily undermine mutual trust and promote an atmosphere of suspicion and cynicism, levelling all overtures of peace, munificence, and good will as unmitigated self-interest.

Although the implications of Kierkegaard's Christian world view seem dire from an outsider's perspective-- he does not dilute his pessimism towards human beings' natural receptivity to truth and justice, and many will take offence at his delimitation of 'sinful' humankind's ability to recognize and will the good --<sup>1395</sup> his existence-communication is

<sup>1392</sup> Jackson 251.

<sup>1393</sup> See Ruether 28.

<sup>1394</sup> On the absence of social justice from his account of "creative, aristocratic polity", see Ansell-Pearson 51.

<sup>1395</sup> See, for example, WL [revised] 276: "[T]he world [...] simply cannot grasp why someone does not want to be selfish, but rather that a selfish person even more selfishly can wish to be regarded as unselfish." Proponents of 'autonomy over heteronomy' [Hampson "Autonomy" 2], a "politics of difference" or "basic self-determination" [Gudorf 380, 385] will also not see him as an ally in this regard. His distinction between Christian and non-Christian capacity for truth would be regarded by some feminists as "the kyriarchally dualistic way of thinking". [Hunt 746] However, to the degree that all remain sinners in dire need of divine grace, the dualism of 'us' and 'them' is subverted. Furthermore, as Bannerji argues, a 'politics of difference'



permeated by grace and divine enabling which neither whitewashes atrocities nor evades the 'Golgothas' of fallen creation. Furthermore, Kierkegaard's critique of human folly and fallibility is extended to both rich and poor, male and female; hence, he can criticize the victimizing powers of the world and yet resist an inadvertent ratification of victimhood.<sup>1396</sup> Accordingly, everyone regardless of time, culture, or privilege is truly responsible to God for herself and for one another.

By emphasizing the qualitative difference which separates God from humankind, Kierkegaard addresses the theological fallacy of human identity being annihilated or impinged upon by God, which arises when a human concept of sensate power is projected onto God. Much of postmodern thought echoes Nietzsche's cry: "[H]e who wants to become free has to become so through his own actions and that freedom falls into no one's lap like a miraculous gift."<sup>1397</sup> Conversely, Kierkegaard asserted that human freedom is not threatened by divine omnipotence, but founded upon it as a free and loving gift which neither diminishes the Giver nor enslaves the recipient. Yet, on account of the Incarnation, Kierkegaard's emphasis does not lead to an abstract, inaccessible, unknowable transcendence. Because of God's unlimited power, made readily available to all earnest seekers, promise is wedded to the paradoxical command to love thy neighbours in the central figure of Christ who is both human exemplar and divine Enabler.<sup>1398</sup>

The importance of the neighbourly 'other' for Kierkegaard provides grounds for practical engagement, as opposed to the "tepidity" of Nietzsche's *amor fati* where the line between universal affirmation and resignation is all-too-thin.<sup>1399</sup> Due to the inseparable

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as espoused by multiculturalism may harbour its own essentialist biases, [548] or subvert constructive political action altogether. [Segal 27] It is safe to say that Kierkegaard's severe polemical tone, directed towards a society indulging in its 'Christian' pretences, would be radically modified were Kierkegaard to address himself to a multicultural, post-Christian era.

<sup>1396</sup> On the 'passive complicity' of a victimized society, see Tombs 91. On the importance of recognizing the different sinful tendencies between the powerful and the weak, see Koontz 174. On the universal ability to exert 'power over', see Coakley 107.

<sup>1397</sup> UM 252.

<sup>1398</sup> This two-fold focus obviates a self-centred focus on personal actualization, as articulated by J. B. Torrance: "More important than our experience of Christ is the Christ of our experience." [34] Houlgate observes that, "Nietzsche ignores the immense importance of divine incarnation in Christian belief". [Hegel 40]

<sup>1399</sup> Tanner *Nietzsche* 68. Tanner attributes the uncompleted status of Nietzsche's book on transvaluation to

connection between his christocentric theology and his socio-political outlook, Kierkegaard's position is more resistant to appropriation by fascist or tyrannical agendas.<sup>1400</sup> Moreover, his heightened sensitivity to issues of authority, epistemological humility in vigilantly supplying correctives in response to ever-changing contextual imbalances while extending hermeneutical suspicion to one's own views,<sup>1401</sup> and awareness of the ease with which the 'learner' may be obstructed from finding her personal, unique, existential response to the truth by even the most solicitous 'instructor' render Kierkegaard a particularly well-suited and prolific dialogue partner for marginalized individuals.<sup>1402</sup> Recent history has painfully shown how a macrocosmic focus on species-wide amelioration all-too-easily sacrifices individuals and social justice upon the idealistic altars of deified 'progress'.

A canny observer might ask whether Kierkegaard's view of the world steeled in sinful rebellion against its Creator-God is any less agonistic than Nietzsche's perspective. But the Danish theologian would promptly assert that God, in his omnipotence, knows neither genuine threat nor defeat. Moreover, this very rebellion is itself posited upon a perpetually upheld and uplifting foundation of divine love and freedom, which both establishes the worth and identity of every human being in history, and provides the requisite acceptance, forgiveness, and empowerment which every princess and pauper, standing equally hapless and helpless in the sight of God, desperately needs. Hence, Kierkegaard's perspective is relevant and suggestive for those striving to hold together the existential tensions which celebrate unity in the face of disparity and difference in the face

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spiritual rather than physical incapacity-- "because in the end Nietzsche found himself at a loss." [77]

<sup>1400</sup> Houlgate contends that Nietzsche's ethically suspect concept of "an aristocratic, tragic society" opens the door for such abuses. [*Hegel* 196] Volf derides "the Nietzschean kind of affirmation of life, which is a paradise for the strong but a hell for the weak, because it celebrates the way things are, which is to say the way the strong have made them to be". [108] Perhaps Nietzsche would have responded to the National Socialists' agenda with the abject horror of Ivan Karamazov when his father's murderer confesses that he was 'just following Ivan's orders'. But he is implicated nonetheless. Conversely, Nicoletti observes that German theologians such as Erik Peterson regarded Kierkegaard as a source of solace and support in opposing Nazism. [192]

<sup>1401</sup> JK 127 [1847].

<sup>1402</sup> See Berry 212-213: "Kierkegaard's emphasis on freedom is the anthropological corollary of his emphasis on God as 'Possibility,' and is fundamental to any theology of liberation." For feminist rejections of 'power-over', see Holmes 239, Johnson 169, Fiorenza 143.

of conformity.<sup>1403</sup>

#### IV. Concluding Summary:

The preceding two chapters examined three nexus of a reconstructed dialogue between Friedrich Nietzsche and Søren Kierkegaard. With regard to cosmology, Nietzsche accused Kierkegaard of negating an amoral, 'telos-free' universe and escaping to an imaginary other-world of eternity, and of being, thus, guilty of existential cowardice. Paradoxically, Kierkegaard levelled the same charge against Nietzsche, on the grounds that Nietzsche was negating a moral, telos-ful universe by escaping to an imaginary other-world of human rebellion. Both assertions were valid within their particular contexts: it takes courage to doubt-- *pace* Nietzsche-- when 'faith' is fashionable, and it takes courage to believe-- *pace* Kierkegaard-- when 'doubt' is fashionable.<sup>1404</sup> On the subject of what it means to be human, Nietzsche accused Kierkegaard of complicity in the promulgation of 'slave' values and subsequent mediocrity, which obfuscate human instincts and development. Ironically, Kierkegaard accused Nietzsche of complicity in the promulgation of 'master' values and subsequent mediocrity, which obfuscate human freedom and spiritual advancement, asserting that it is only through Christ that universal slavery to "the laws of the flesh and of the drives"<sup>1405</sup> and an inescapable determinism of individual, societal, and cosmic proportions is unmasked and ultimately transformed. In the comparison of their concepts of power, Nietzsche contended that the church in general and Kierkegaard in particular typified human endeavours to consolidate personal power and minimize external threats through such duplicitous constructs as 'selflessness' and 'divine love'. By contrast, Kierkegaard contended that humanity in general and Nietzsche in particular typified autonomous rebellion against divine authority, seeking to justify personal control and minimize existential accountability before God through such duplicitous constructs as 'master power' and 'slave power'-- the myth of mastery.

<sup>1403</sup> On the challenges and failures of the modern multicultural liberal state to address these tensions, see Taylor 37-39. For theoretical attempts to preserve otherness from assimilation by the self/ same, see Hirsch and Olson 94, Luce Irigaray *Ethics* 12-13, *Speculum* 139, Jones "God" 110, Washbourn 961.

<sup>1404</sup> See UP I 364-365.

Nietzsche would have been right to protest that, in posing behind a cloud of feigned unknowing, Kierkegaard was cunningly able to exert a formidable influence in an attempt to 'deceive his reader into the truth'.<sup>1406</sup> As eager polemicists, both men unapologetically declared war against the illusions which, they believed, blinded nineteenth-century Europe, wielding considerable intellectual and rhetorical power in the process. But whereas Nietzsche sought to turn the world upside-down with his 'dangerous knowledge' and initiate a new era of extraordinaires, Kierkegaard sought to avoid ineffectual societal 'renovations', by testifying through-- not in spite of-- suffering for the Gospel and the necessary offence and denigration it occasions in a world of revolt against God. He himself would likely have admitted to shortcomings in his presentation and, arguably, conceded the point that, amidst the uncertainty of political tumult in 1848, he unwisely ascribed an indirect link between the public's endorsement of sensate authority and submission to divine authority. Despite some inconsistencies, however, Kierkegaard's comprehension of the limitations of sensate authority and his poignant attempts to sever its unfortunate allegiance with spiritual authority demonstrate internal coherence, whereas Nietzsche's formulation of power remains, from start to finish, a plurality of paradoxes, both breath-taking in scope and magnificently flawed.

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<sup>1405</sup> CI 301.

<sup>1406</sup> PV 7.

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